No. 265 / MARCH 1995

THE NI NEW INTERNATIONALIST

South Africa

New dawn, cold light of day

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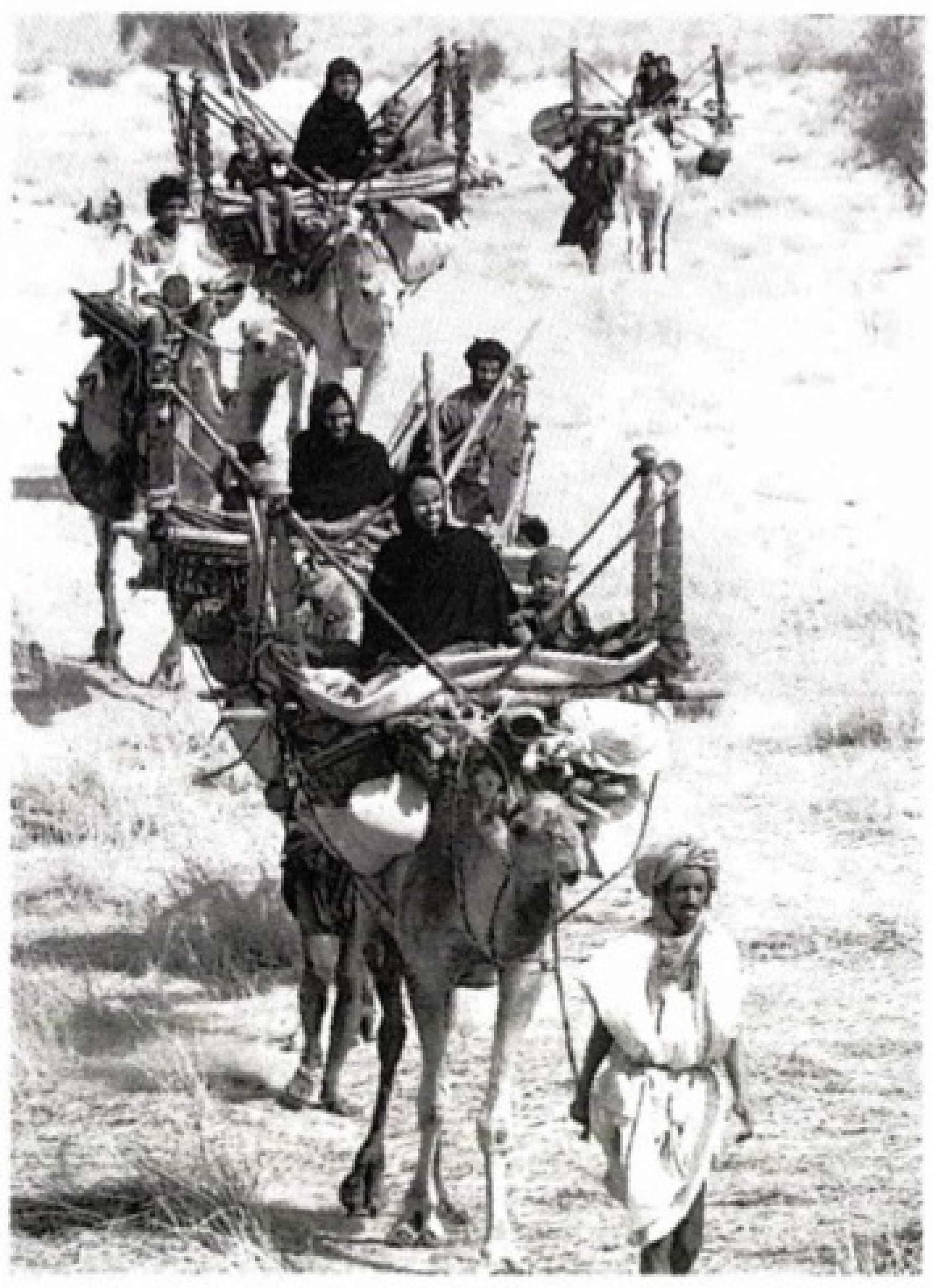

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- **On the road to nowhere** – notes from a modern American nomad.
- **The Maasai and the traveller** – a conversation bridging cultures across the continents.
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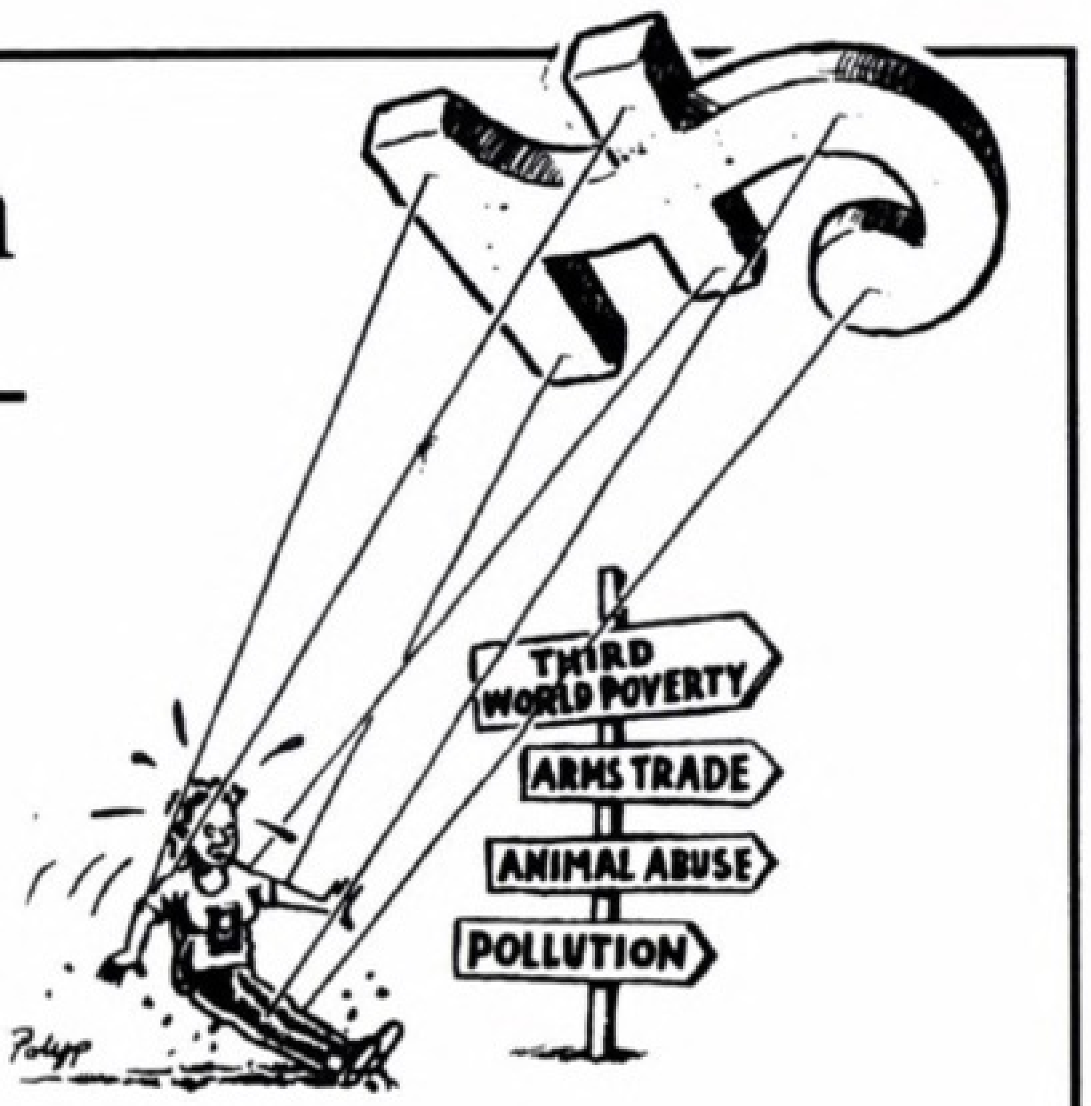

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CONTENTS

CARLOS REYES-MANZO

New dawn, cold light of day 7
South Africans have awoken from the nightmare of apartheid to find that they still have to escape its legacy. ***David Ransom*** *discovers the power of the human spirit that's lighting the way.*

The sisterly republic 11
Ferial Haffajee *reports on the birth of the world's first non-sexist state.*

Colour-blind capitalism 14
Quarrel with the system, not the whites, urges ***Neville Alexander***.

Promised land 15
Reform is restoring land to some of those from whom it was stolen. ***Troth Wells*** *explores the problems that come with it.*

Walking on the moon 17
Sindiwe Magona *wonders how people can reclaim rights they never knew they had.*

SOUTH AFRICA - THE FACTS 18

Children without childhoods 20
The roar of the ANC's 'Young Lions' has turned into Rachel's lament. ***Nancy Scheper-Hughes*** *stares some hard facts in the face.*

Bring back the boycott! 23
Bafana Khumalo *can't see what living-dead global performers have to offer the new South Africa.*

Palaces, toilets and the big boys 24
Delivering decent housing for all is the new government's most vital test, as ***Alan Morris*** *explains.*

Simply - the road to freedom 26

Gold without glister 28
David Ransom *tracks a dirty business underground.*

Letters 2
Letter from Chechnya 3
Update 4
The NI Interview
with **Khalida Messaoudi** 31
Reviews: plus **Noam Chomsky** classic 32
Curiosities 34
Endpiece: by **Jon Miller** 35
Country profile: Equatorial Guinea 36

FRONT COVER PHOTO: AT A PEACE RALLY IN JOHANNESBURG, 1994, **PAUL VELASCO/SOUTHLIGHT**
MAGAZINE DESIGNED BY **IAN NIXON**

THIS MONTH'S **THEME**

South Africa

FROM THIS MONTH'S **EDITOR**

I ARRIVED straight from the airport for my first appointment in Johannesburg and could not remember whether I'd adjusted my watch correctly for the time difference with London. An amiable-looking man wearing an immaculate white shirt, crisp black trousers and sparkling moccasins was coming towards me, so I asked him for the time.

He stopped and looked quizzically at my cheap Taiwanese wristwatch. 'It's not working, then?' he asked. 'I'm not surprised. I'm a watch-mender, you know.'

I explained my difficulty and he told me the time from his own, somewhat superior, timepiece. I was an hour early and he wasn't rushing anywhere, so we introduced ourselves and walked together for a while through the city streets. This was not the introduction I had expected to a city that has the reputation of being one of the most violent in the world.

Des, apart from mending watches, drives trucks and lives in Soweto. Yes, he said, there had been big changes in South Africa – and not before time. But he reckoned it would be another 10 years, perhaps 20, before things started to improve. He was prepared to wait, though he'd rather not – he and his family had already been waiting 15 years for a house.

'You see,' he said, 'we could not even talk to whites before. We were told it was not our place. Now we can talk to them. I can talk to you. But whites always seem to trust documents more than people. And you never know what they're going to write on their pieces of paper.'

Well, here I am, writing it down. As a general rule I like to send copies of the final version to the people I've written about, since I find it a good discipline to imagine that they might be reading what I write. But I'm afraid I've lost the scrap of paper on which I scribbled down Des's address.

This is annoying. I'd like to know what he thinks. He put me in mind of what an old South African friend once said to me when we were working together in London. 'You know,' he said one day when we were feeling particularly dispirited, 'here you get the feeling of a people whose time has already gone. In South Africa you get the feeling of a people whose time has yet to come.'

The **NI** is now obtainable directly from Johannesburg – you'll find the address inside the front cover – and South Africans join the dedicated international band of subscribers from Aotearoa/New Zealand, Australia, Britain, Canada and the United States in what we call 'reader countries'. Welcome!

We'll do our best to add 'robots' (traffic lights) to the long list of colloquialisms we can use to baffle each other. In return, if any reader in South Africa comes across a watch-mender in Soweto called Des, I'd be very grateful indeed if you could give him a copy of this magazine, with my apologies, and I'll send you a replacement.

David Ransom

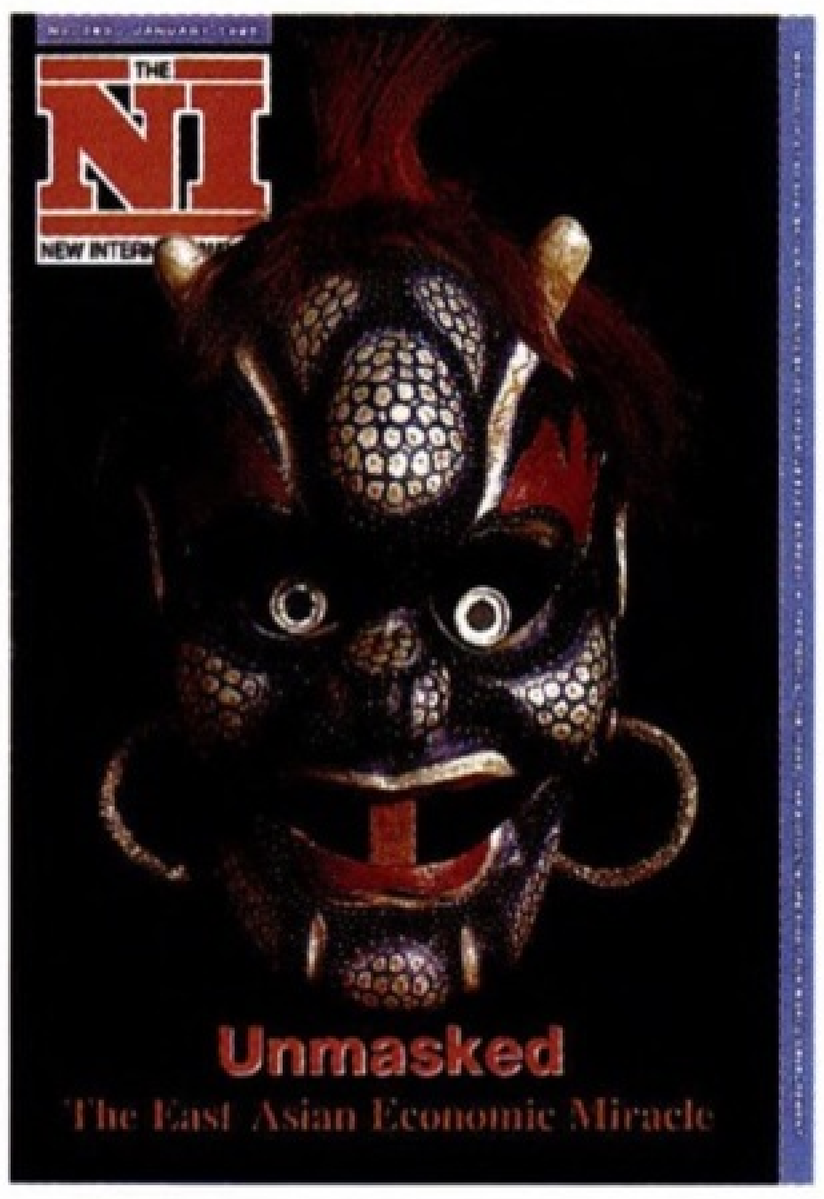
David Ransom
for the ***New Internationalist*** *Co-operative*

Letters

The New Internationalist welcomes your letters. But please keep them short. They may be edited for purposes of space or clarity. Include a home telephone number if possible and send your letters to the nearest editorial office. The address is inside the front cover.

Lucky women

Your report on the growing socio-economic and environmental problems experienced in some East Asian countries (**NI 263**) reflected my own observations. As a civil engineer I have spent 30 years working in or visiting the area. Full marks for highlighting this darker side of the 'Pacific Rim' economic coin.



But it is a pity that in reporting Singapore's brutal caning laws you did not make clear that they relate only to men. Women are exempt from judicial caning. Similar caning laws apply in Malaysia, though as yet to a lesser degree.

In contrast, where women and girls suffer in disproportionate numbers from disaster or adverse conditions, you appear to be at pains to make this clear.

Surely in the interests of fairness and equality you should also point out where men are the main or only victims of discrimination or injustice?

David Yarwood
Berkshire, England

UN shudders

On two occasions your issue on the *UN* (**NI 262**) gave me the shudders. When Mahbub ul-Haq, whom you rush to label as a kind of visionary, expresses the belief that the application of market principles would favour developing countries, one is left almost speechless. Is it possible that enlightened opinion has yet to understand that there is no such thing as a 'free market' but only a web of deceit and disinformation devised to cover up the exploitation of the poorest and to support the unchallenged domination of business?

In another article Mohamed Sahnoun suggests, apparently without irony, that personalities such as ex-President Jimmy Carter could be entrusted with the most delicate matters on behalf of the international community, forgetting how his administration supported unflagging champions of democracy such as Somoza and the Shah of Iran, as well as its involvement in major terrorist enterprises like the US-backed Indonesian aggression on East Timor.

The above lapses by no means mar the **NI**'s overall approach to the realities of the world order, which remains refreshing and unconventional. But if one is prepared to accept such statements, one might as well subscribe to the *Economist* instead.

Claudio Sacconi
Torino, Italy

All is not lost!

On 15 December 1994, hope was revived that through the UN the South could successfully challenge the existing world order (**NI 262**). Despite frantic countermoves led by the NATO nuclear cartel, an historic resolution sponsored by the General Assembly asks for a World Court judgement on the legal status of use and the threat of use of nuclear weapons.

For the first time since the creation of the UN, the legality of the unwritten qualification for permanent membership of the Security Council has been challenged. Moreover, the voting patterns suggest that the days of 'nuclear might is right' are numbered.

The resolution was won by 73 votes to 43. There were 38 abstentions and 25 not voting. Even the nuclear weapons states split, with China not voting. Ukraine abstained and the Western caucus collapsed. By abstaining, Canada and Norway broke ranks with NATO, Japan and Australia with the US and Ireland, Sweden and Austria with the European Union.

The most serious insubordination, however, was that Aotearoa/New Zealand voted for it – the only Security Council member and the only Western state to do so. Public pressure forced the conservative Government to side with other South Pacific and Asian States who bore the brunt of threats to trade and aid.

Nuclear deterrence will now stand trial at the Hague and the prosecution case is damning. All is not lost!

Katie Boanas-Dewes
World Court Project International
Steering Committee
Christchurch, Aotearoa/New Zealand

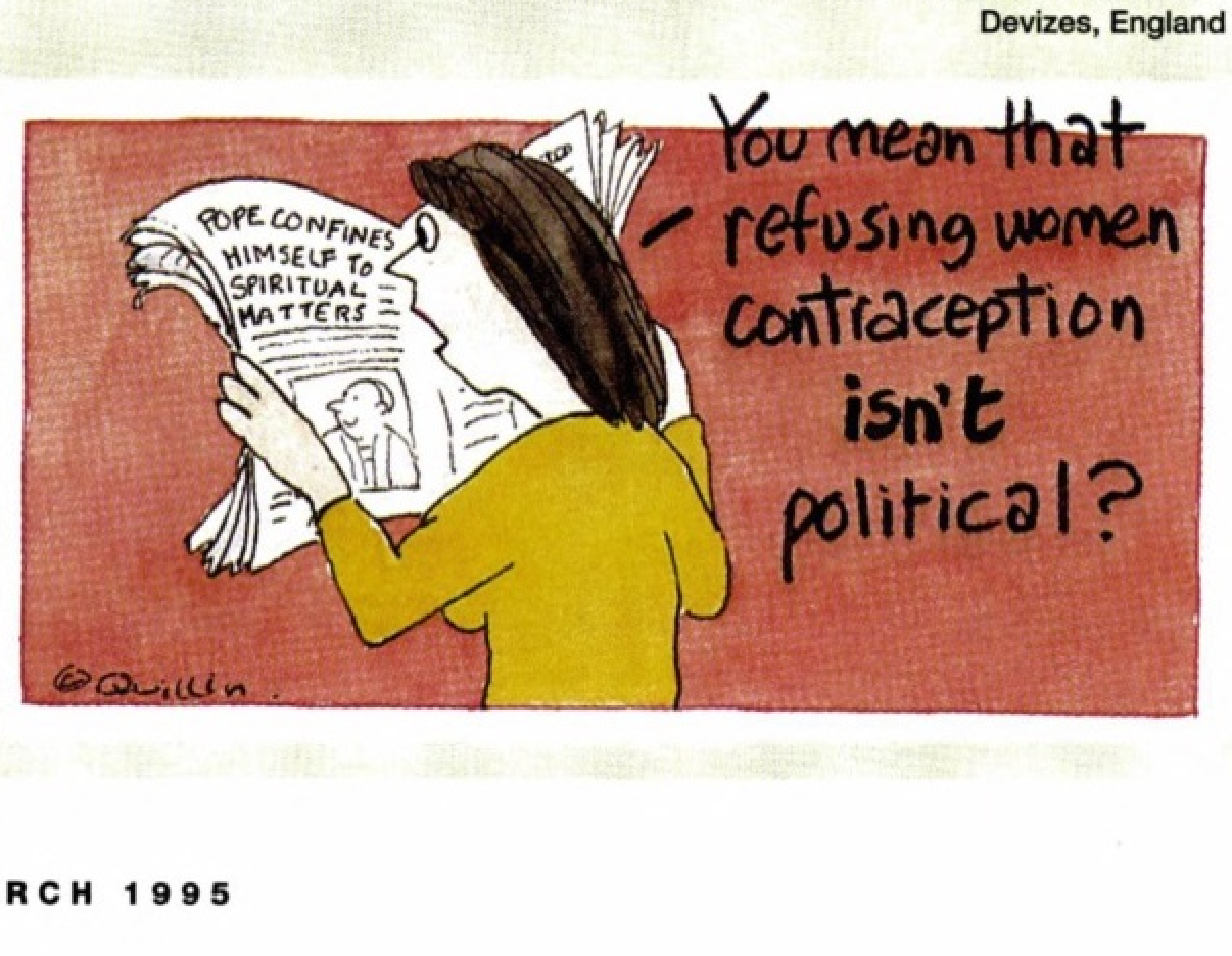
Silent churches

In early December 1994 it was announced that Christian Aid had complained to the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund that their so-called aid to the developing world was of little help to the many millions who were most poor. It is a pity that the Archbishop of Canterbury, the Pope and leaders of other religions did not add their voices to this criticism.

Christian Aid is an active charity and risks being told by the British Government to confine itself to charitable works. Our church leaders do not speak out because they are liable to be told by the Government to confine themselves to things spiritual and to stay out of politics. Yet Archbishop Tutu in South Africa said: 'For the church in any country to retreat from politics is nothing short of heresy. Christianity is political or it is not Christianity.'

If the church would accept and act on this truth it might lead to the huge ethical changes which must come if we are to be saved from ourselves. An increasing number of people are beginning to realize this. With action we might also save the deprived millions in the developing world.

Arnold Fullerton
Devizes, England


POPE CONFINES HIMSELF TO SPIRITUAL MATTERS
You mean that refusing women contraception isn't political?
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Technology costs

In response to your letters about the Internet, I would like to say that we are closing our eyes to the facts if we do not realize that the technology remains so immensely expensive that it will remain out of reach of at least two-thirds of the world's population for the next 50 years at least. And with the strategy of the information-technology industry to phase out all cheaper computers and software, it will probably remain elusive for even longer.

With all these technologies, we keep on forgetting that there are billions of people who still cannot read or write and who have no food or other basic amenities. We also forget that because so much money is spent on such developments, food is going to remain elusive for a large proportion of the population for a long time to come.

I have access to the Internet occasionally and use it. It is a very useful tool, but it shakes me up to think of the direction that these things are taking...

Michael
Gujarat, India

Canada's complicity

I was pleased to see **NI**'s exposé of the weapons trade (*Arms Trade*, **NI 261**), but would like to make a few constructive criticisms.

I was disappointed that there was no mention of Canada's complicity. One of the biggest obstacles facing the Canadian peace movement is the widespread myth that our country is a great contributor to peace and that we are not involved in the weapons trade or militarism. The truth is that Canada was the world's seventh-biggest military exporter in 1991. Between 1990 and 1993, we were the eighth-largest exporter of weapons to the Third World.

The use of the word 'defence' conjures up all sorts of illusions that these industries are somehow 'defending' the rights and freedoms of the public. However, the main rights and freedoms being defended are those of transnational corporations (TNCs). Military exports allow TNCs to continue their unbridled exploitation of the natural and human resources of the planet, regardless of the brutality and destruction which results.

Finally, I would like to make a correction – COAT stands for Coalition to Oppose the Arms Trade and our address is 489 (not 484), Metcalfe Street, Ottawa.

Richard Sanders
COAT, Ottawa, Canada

The views expressed on the letters page are not necessarily those of the New Internationalist.

LETTER FROM **CHECHNYA**

Walnuts and sunflower seeds

The bombing of Grozny by the Russians destroyed not only buildings and lives but the traditions which lay at the heart of Chechen society. **Olivia Ward** searches for signs of rebirth.

MUD again. Muddy skies, muddy buildings, mud underfoot. The endless misery of it penetrates to the bone, as the dirt invades every exposed core of the body.

I've learned that living in the ruins of a city requires a special kind of endurance, the sort the great Russian poet Anna Akhnatova knew when she wrote: 'So much to do today: kill memory, kill pain, turn heart into a stone, and yet prepare to live again.'

I would like to look for signs of spring in this trampled place without heat, light or water. Instead I watch the people I know by sight, by name, in their bomb-blasted apartments. They are moving toward nothing. Everything is behind them. Each night of the war, as the rockets exploded, their reward for survival was a black hole in their lives.

ALAN HUGHES

Last Fall we used to chat in the central square where the men leapt and whirled in their wild Muslim dances, gold teeth gleaming and Chechen knives flashing in the frost. They were defiant, but I was afraid for them. Watching the Russian war machine cranking up in the distance, I could predict what was to come.

'Hello, have you eaten?' old Magomed would ask, pressing some walnuts and sunflower seeds into my hand no matter what the time of day.

'What she needs is real food,' Rosa would scold. There's no point hanging about here talking to you without some good *shashlik* under her belt.'

Guests in Chechnya are part god, part captive. To refuse hospitality, no matter how inconvenient or unaffordable, is an impossibility. A guest who is not fed within 40 minutes knows she or he is unwanted, I was regularly reminded. That, in any decent household, was a disgrace.

But as the weeks wore on, and charred Russian corpses replaced the lively crowds in the square, the people in the centre depended on the hospitality of others. I retreated with them first to the outer edge of the centre, then to the suburbs.

The foibles, the vanities, the flamboyant humor began to fall away. Stripped of their eccentricities, people began to resemble each other. Life at the cutting edge of necessity peeled away individuality in a way that surprised me. Even I felt myself reduced to a body with freezing feet.

But I had money that would allow me to drive away, and no lifetime of possessions to abandon in the city. Visiting those who had no choice but to stay, I watched the daily routine become smaller and more desperate – a battle against hunger, cold, homelessness and the omnipresent mud that sucked at our boots as though trying to pull us down into some foul pit of Hades.

Magomed and Rosa went to a village with relatives but the war found them there too. Their punishment for heaven knows what imaginary crime was to move from house to house in their old age, adding to the burden of poor families.

Mine was to watch ordinary people mutate into survivors. Each morning there was the trek to the reservoir and the usual rumors that the Russians had poisoned the water in some final, genocidal gesture. At noon perhaps the trucks of free bread from the villages would arrive. Women who were used to shopping had learned to beg.

'As for me,' said language professor Tatyana, 'I learned to loot. It really doesn't take much skill. You just have to swallow your code of ethics.'

She faced me squarely, her watery and bloodshot eyes locked on mine.

'What do you think? Is it better to ask for handouts, or help yourself? What would you do in my place?'

But there are no answers here in limbo, this place of being and non-being, where happiness, in so far as you can remember it, is the absence of pain. As Tatyana lost her morality, so the normal boundaries of civilized life have collapsed. People weep in front of strangers as they would ordinarily be ashamed to do, their heads thrown back, their mouths open in a mask of misery. Like lunatics from an old bedlam scene they wander aimlessly, accosting unknown people in the street, telling them stories from the depths of their anguish.

In a city without calendars, we have forgotten spring. Traces of green nibble at the fringes of the mud. Rebirth and hope – one day they will mean something to us. A day when flesh prevails over bone. When the skin has grown back over the exposed nerves. When Magomed finds me in the square and holds out his hand, full of sunflower seeds and walnuts. ■

Olivia Ward is the Moscow bureau chief of the *Toronto Star*.

Update

VENEZUELA

Vanity fair

Beauty industry makes its mark

VENEZUELA is reputedly the world's biggest per-capita consumer of cosmetics and personal-care products. In a country jealously proud of its reputation for beautiful women, the failure last year of Venezuela's Minorka Mercado to capture the Miss Universe crown was viewed in some quarters as a national catastrophe.

'A baffling decision,' ran the banner headline in one local newspaper, summing up a national pride that was more offended than salvaged by Mercado's eventual third place behind Miss India and Miss Colombia.

Such vanity is not entirely without foundation. With just 0.36 per cent of the world's population, Venezuela has won 20 per cent of international beauty titles in the last 14 years, including three Miss Universes and three Miss Worlds, according to organizers here.

Venezuelans' fierce pride in their nation's prominence on the international beauty circuit has intensified as economic shambles and political chaos has brought depression and humiliation in other walks of public life.

'It's extraordinary, the human beauty here,' says Irene Saez Conde, the blonde and fair-skinned 1981 Miss Universe and high-profile mayor of a Caracas district. 'Everywhere you go, there are beautiful women – and men. No wonder we win so often.'

Although sensitivity to sexism and ideological distaste for beauty pageants are still rare in Venezuela, some are cynical about the country's multi-million-dollar beauty industry and its obsessive glorification of female looks.

'Give me a blonde wig, an artificial nose and 10 years in a foreign modelling parlour, like those women have, and even I would be on the winner's rostrum,' says Caracas shop assistant Ana Menendez.

Plastic surgery is common on the Venezuelan beauty circuit and most contestants sweat blood fine-tuning their figures in the gym, perfecting their vowels and learning to strut the catwalk.

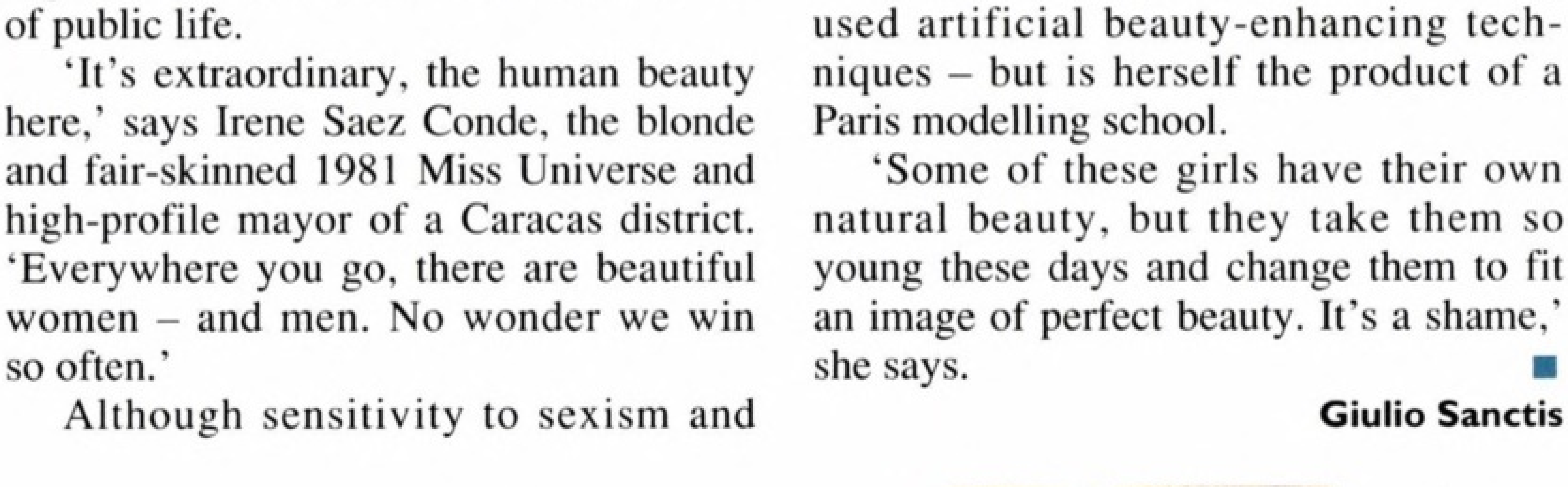
Would-be contestants are hand-picked at parties, universities and modelling schools, then painstakingly 'groomed' by the men who control the industry – like Osmel Sousa, who scorns feminism and argues that countries opposed to beauty contests 'have lost the ability to appreciate women'.

'We want the perfect face, the perfect size, the perfect walk, and for all that you have to work hard,' he says.

Irene Saez is proud of never having used artificial beauty-enhancing techniques – but is herself the product of a Paris modelling school.

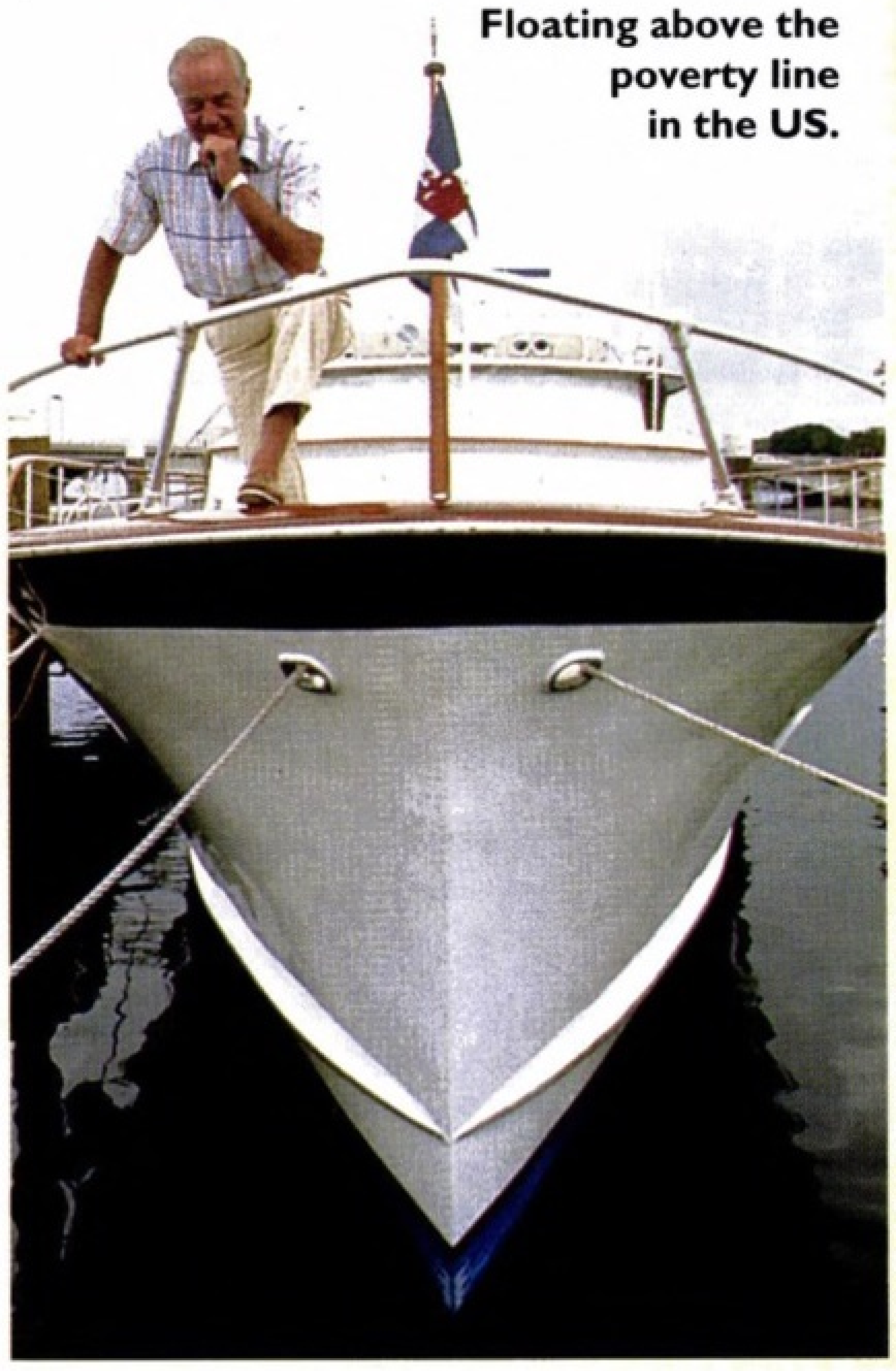
'Some of these girls have their own natural beauty, but they take them so young these days and change them to fit an image of perfect beauty. It's a shame,' she says. ■

Giulio Sanctis



Beauties and the beasts: the South American contingent limber up for the Miss World contest in Sun City, South Africa.

FRANK SPOONER / SOUTH LIGHT



Floating above the poverty line in the US.

JOHN GARRETT / CAMERA PRESS

Penthouse and pavement

According to a recent US Census Bureau survey an additional one million US citizens slid into poverty in 1993, while inequalities in income distribution reached record levels: 15.1 per cent of Americans lived below the poverty line, while for children this figure rose to 25 per cent. Child poverty levels have been growing fastest in the suburbs – areas usually associated with middle-class security. Meanwhile the highest-earning fifth of the population took home 48.2 per cent of the nation's income, while the lowest-earning fifth had to make do on 3.6 per cent.

Source: Share International, Vol 13 No 9

Passing the buck

In 1991 some 102 co-operative societies, which operated illegally as fully-fledged banks, folded in Pakistan. Around 200,000 people lost their hard-earned cash totalling nearly $425 million. The co-ops had attracted the life savings of ordinary people with their promises of unusually high interest rates of 30 per cent. Among those enticed were a significant proportion of pensioners and widows and other people with limited incomes. The State Bank of Pakistan, the country's main regulatory bank, ignored their existence.

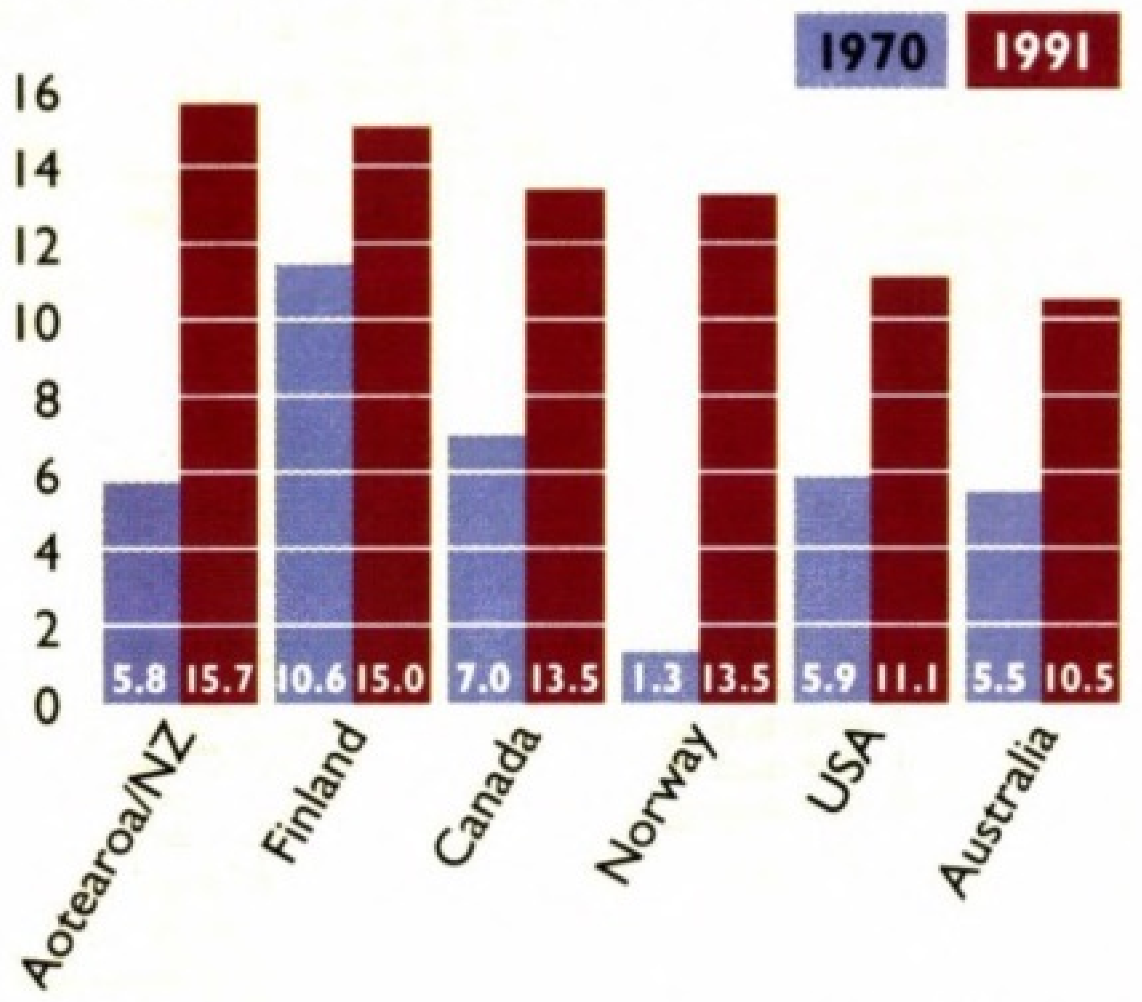
When the fiasco occurred Benazir Bhutto promised that the victims would be compensated by the end of 1994 if she came to power. She is now Prime Minister, the deadline has passed and only a tenth of the claimants have got their money. These are people who lost the smallest amounts. It seems unlikely that the rest will see much of their cash. Many political heavyweights and business tycoons were involved in the scandal and there are press reports of payoffs in political circles.

Source: Tariq Butt, Islamabad/Gemini

The Xcessive generation

As the millennium approaches teenage suicide rates are rising alarmingly in the countries (all of them 'developed') that top the list:

SUICIDES PER 100,000 TEENAGERS.



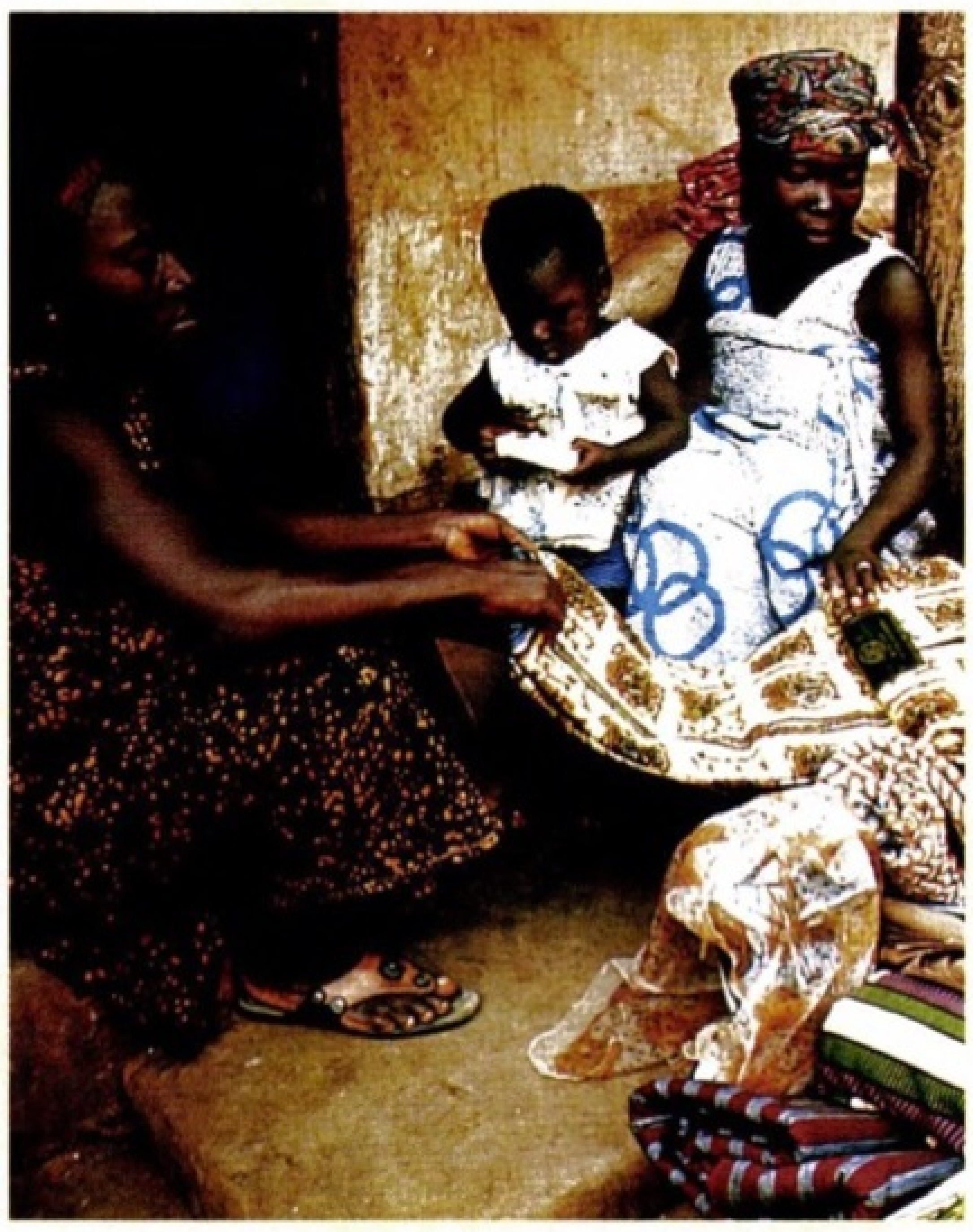
Source: WHO/Gemini

Mind over muscle

An international study by the World Health Organization has found that psychological problems are more disabling than physical illness. People with conditions such as major depression and generalized anxiety were unable to carry out usual daily tasks on an average of six days a month, compared to an average of less than two days a month for those without psychiatric symptoms.

Source: WHO

Workshares



MARION KAPLAN / CAMERA PRESS

In Ghana some curious statistics have emerged from the fact that more than 30 per cent of married couples are not living together. When husbands and wives live together men work six hours less per week than they would if they lived on their own. For women, however, living with husbands means five hours more work than living without them.

Source: Populi Vol 21 No 10

HUMAN RIGHTS

PHILIP HAWKINS / CAMERA PRESS

Flag of resistance: the personal becomes political in Palestine.

Taboo broken

Women speak out on violence

Asma Ibrahim stood before the microphone, pulled a bloodied skirt out of a plastic bag and held it up before hundreds of people. She recounted how her father-in-law pulled her by the hair and dragged her along the ground. Her crime? Marriage to his son had not produced a child.

'It's just a relief to talk about it, and to have people listen and support me,' said Ibrahim, who is now 21. She married at 13.

Ibrahim was speaking before a mock tribunal at a conference entitled 'Women, Justice and Law' convened by *Al-Haq,* a Jerusalem-based human-rights group.

One of the great taboos of Palestinian society – public discussion of domestic violence – is finally being broken after the years of preoccupation with the political issues of Israeli occupation.

Another speaker at the conference, Nadia Zidan, stood proudly in front of the crowd to tell of her 10-year struggle to escape a marriage that had never been consummated. The Greek Orthodox Christian courts have stalled the case. She has been required to take medical tests to prove she is a virgin and has faced injunctions ordering her to live with her husband to see if things would work out.

The one telephone helpline for women in the West Bank and Gaza is based in Jerusalem and still only functions part time. It has received 110 calls from women suffering abuse by their husbands or sexual abuse by relatives.

Aida Teuma Sleiman, director of the Women Against Violence programme in Nazareth, says the issue of domestic violence has received more attention in Israel. The debate over gender issues in the West Bank and Gaza is complicated by the divergence of views between secular women and those who adhere closely to traditional Islam.

Maha Abdo, a social worker at the Women's Counselling and Legal Aid Centre in Jerusalem, worries that groups clamouring for funding from Western donors might quickly adopt Western notions because they are trendy. Wafa Abou Shnaq, who wears a veil and observes Islamic Sharia law, argues that Islamist women should not be left out of the debate. 'Maybe one day we will organize our own conference and invite the secular women to present their point of view,' says Shnaq, who is starting an Islamic women's organization in the West Bank town of Tulkarem.

'The other crowd of secular women doesn't reach everybody,' says Shnaq. 'We have the masses but not the organizational capacity. They have the organization but don't reach the masses. We have to work together.'

There was unanimous agreement among all participants in the conference on one thing: that it is time to speak out – and time for ordinary women to do the talking. ■

Roula el-Rifai/Gemini

Update

GUATEMALA

Play ball

Hunger strike highlights abuses in Guatemala

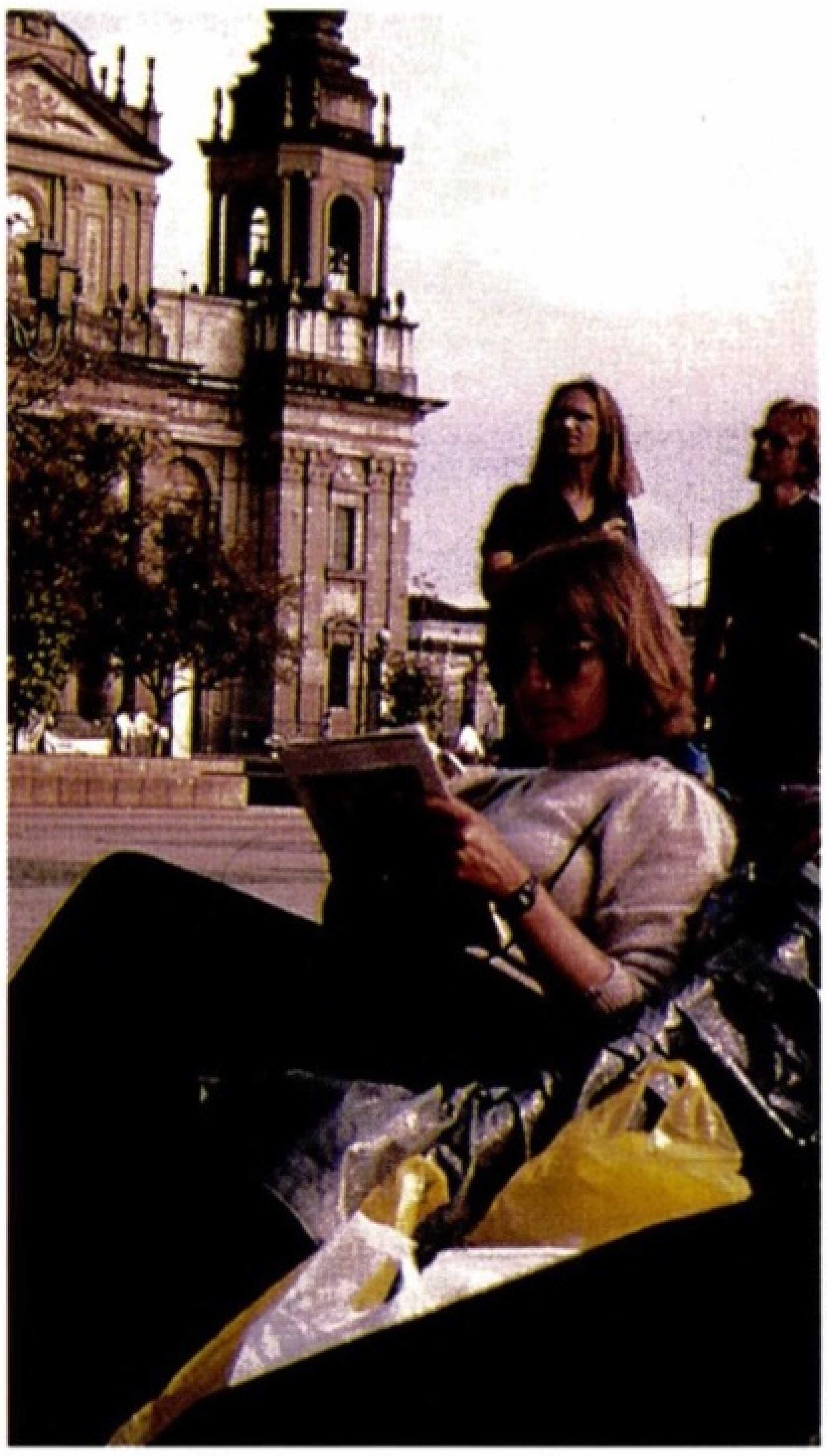
JENNIFER HARBURY, a Harvard-educated lawyer who married Guatemalan guerrilla commandant Efrain Bámaca Velásquez ('Comandante Everardo') began a hunger strike in Guatemala City on 11 October last year. Camped in the main plaza, she demanded that her husband, who has been seen in clandestine army detention and under torture, should be given due process. The Guatemalan Army says he was killed in combat in March 1992.

The case is not unusual. Guatemala's military maintains a powerful grip on government, despite the fact that President Ramiro De Leon Carpio is a former Attorney General for Human Rights. Carpio's own brother, Jorge – a political leader and publisher – was assassinated in June 1993. His daughter-in-law has accused the Vice-Minister of the Interior (a colonel) of trying to intimidate her into giving up her fight to find the killers. The family says the President has remained largely inactive on the case.

The President has sided with the generals on other issues as well. He has agreed to allow the notorious PAC (Civil Self-Defense Patrols) to stay in place. The PAC's numerous human-rights violations against rural populations had previously led him to advocate their abolition. The about-face stunned human-rights observers.

The forced military conscription of indigenous youths continues. The Defense Ministry says that it has been stopped while Congress passes legislation outlawing the practice, but human-rights groups receive numerous complaints indicating the contrary.

Meanwhile a forensic team was forced to stop work on exhumations at a gravesite in the north of the country (see **NI 260**) because of threats from PAC members believed to be under the direction of the local military base.

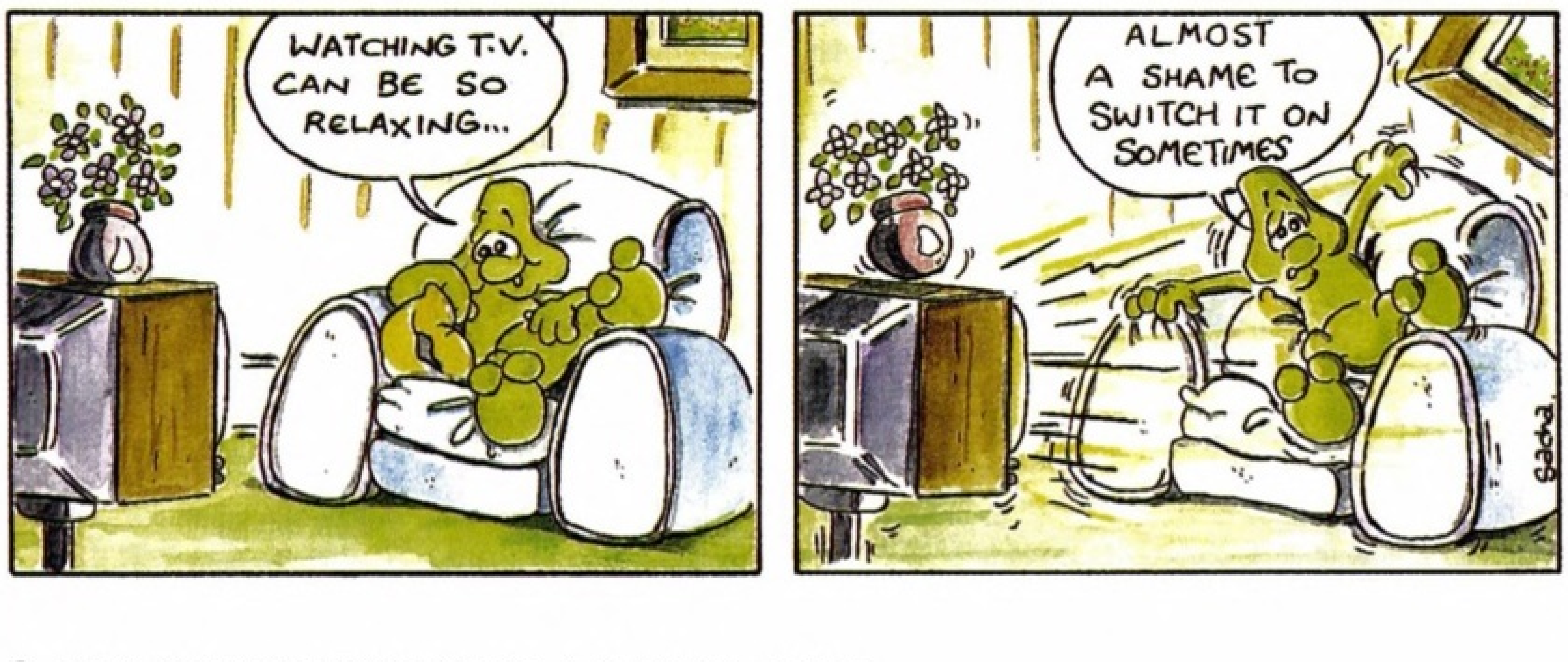

CHRISTINA HOAG

High visibility: Jennifer Harbury on hunger strike in Guatemala City.

While the human-rights situation may have improved from the dreadful abuses of just a few years ago, much remains to be done and politicians still have to play ball with the military if they want to hold on to power. ■

Christina Hoag/Campaign in Solidarity with Jennifer Harbury, Toronto

Chlorophyll by Sacha


WATCHING T.V. CAN BE SO RELAXING...
ALMOST A SHAME TO SWITCH IT ON SOMETIMES
Sacha

Not so big Mac

Finally, a support group for people who work in the worldwide burger chain, McDonalds. Their leaflet may well cause heartburn – 'Are you sick of low wages? Are you sick of being bossed around? Are you sick of poor working conditions? Are you sick of McDonalds? *Do you want to do something about it?* Did you know that McDonalds spends well over *one billion dollars* worldwide every year on ads and promotions to boost their image? – yet they can't, for example, find a single penny to pay overtime. The aim is: get profits UP and wage costs DOWN. No wonder so many chuck the job in. But those who stay can fight to improve things...' How? Well the leaflet has a few suggestions. Workers can demand their legal rights, use company grievance procedures, anonymously tip off the press about food quality and hygiene, secretly join a trade union. For these and other ideas, contact *MWSG, c/o Hackney Trade Union Support Unit, Colin Roach Centre, 10a Bradbury St, London N16, England.*

ALAN HUGHES

Source: GreenLine No 120

Texan first

The state of Texas has filed a $1.1 million lawsuit against two Ku Klux Klan groups, claiming that the groups threatened blacks and burned crosses to try to stop an all-white public housing project from being desegregated. The lawsuit, the first of its kind in the US, says nine Klan members violated the state Fair Housing Act. The Klan is accused of paying white children to beat up black children, threatening whites who befriended black residents, burning crosses and hanging 'White Power' banners near the complex in Vidor.

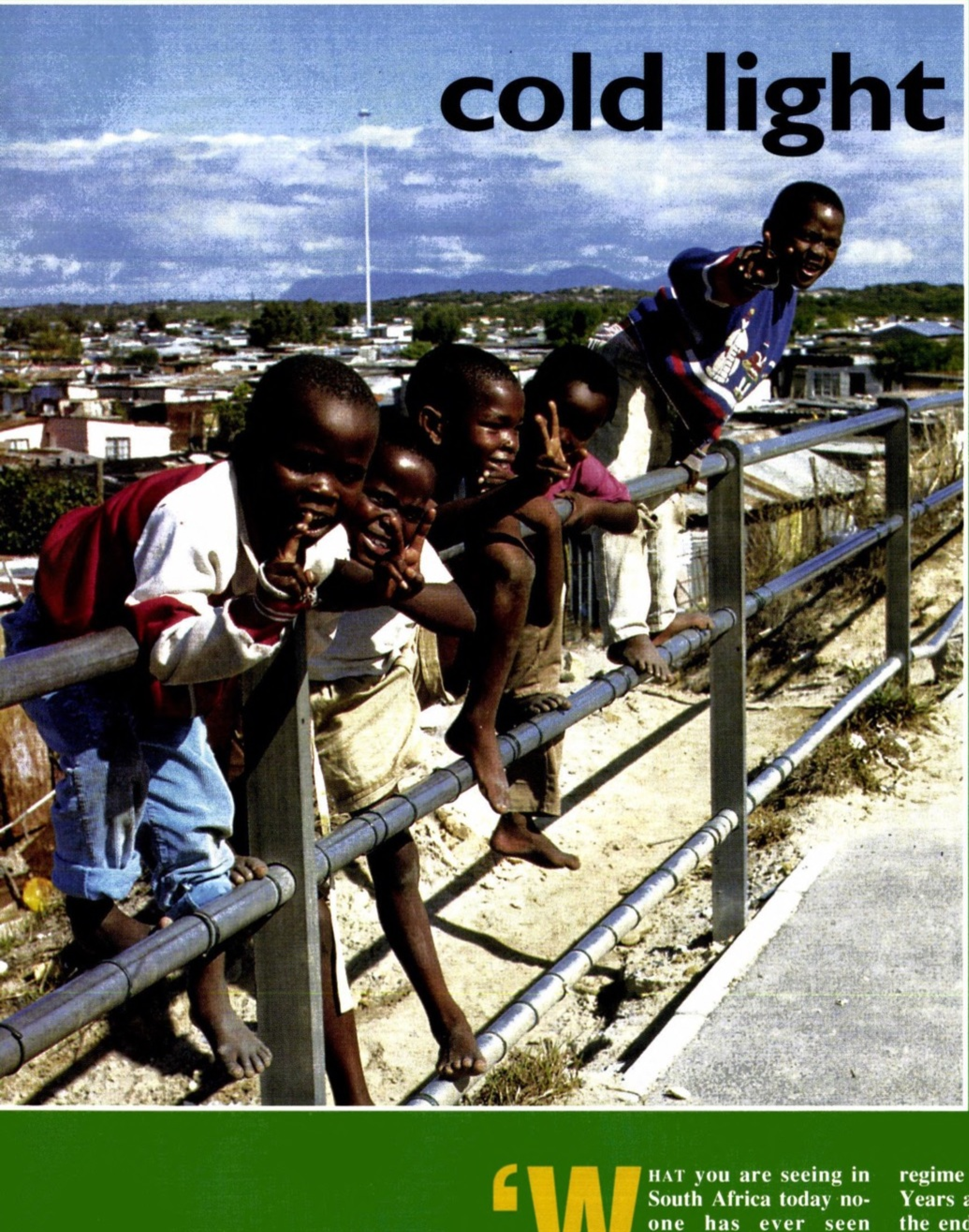
Source: Center for Democratic Renewal

Quote

"I'm not going to stand there alone and palely loitering with my arse exposed!"

Australian Prime Minister **Paul Keating**, demanding a lectern before addressing an audience in Sydney.

New dawn, cold light of day



CARLOS REYES-MANZO

One year after the historic elections, the joyous shock of apartheid's end is giving way to concern about the future. **David Ransom** reports.

'WHAT you are seeing in South Africa today no-one has ever seen here before,' Archie Gumede told me in Durban. Gumede has been a leading member of the African National Congress (ANC) since the 1930s. In May 1990 he was with Nelson Mandela, Walter Sisulu and others in the first team to negotiate with the apartheid regime after the unbanning of the ANC. Years ago none of them expected to see the end of apartheid in their own lifetimes. But they have. Archie Gumede and millions of his fellow South Africans have lived to taste the rare, sweet nectar of liberation. That has made South Africa a very special place indeed.

The apartheid state didn't only inflict damage on its own people. It also rained down chaos upon much of Southern

ONLY THE
POORMAN
FEEL
IT

G MENDEL / MAGNUM

PAUL WEINBERG / SOUTHLIGHT

Feelings: from the squatter settlement to the mine managers' club, the patterns of play speak volumes.

Africa – Namibia, Angola and Mozambique in particular – sponsoring civil wars, sabotage, assassinations, anything that would disrupt potential enemies and prolong its own senseless existence. Relieved of this burden people throughout the region can afford to feel more positive about their future than for a very long time indeed. Free elections were held in Namibia last December and President Mandela immediately wrote off Namibian debts that had been incurred with the apartheid regime. And there are already signs that South Africa will be able to exert a positive influence within the continent as a whole: the economic powers-that-be cannot dismiss this new African giant the way they have dismissed all its neighbours.

Soweto remains hidden away, a guilty secret, behind the gold-mine slag heaps that surround Johannesburg

On the streets of the 'new' South Africa itself, though, you cannot actually *see* a great deal that is new. 'Hippo' military vehicles may surface less frequently on township streets. The 'Mandela for President' posters have gone because Nelson Mandela *is* the President. If there are queues then they are, as always, for water or taxis – not to cast a vote. How reassuringly *ordinary* South Africa appears at first sight to be. And how should it be otherwise? Who can celebrate for ever because it is now possible to utter the word 'Mandela' without being hit over the head, or because it is no longer an offence to be born black?

For this is not yet a 'new' South Africa. The country is, officially and in fact, undergoing a process of 'transition' between the old and something new that remains to be imagined. The Government is one of 'National Unity', guided as much by the deals that made last April's election possible as by the result of the election itself. The machinery of the apartheid state, the armed forces, the civil service, big business, all remain intact. A new dawn may have broken over the country but in the cold light of day the place looks much as it did on the day before.

What you *can* see, of course, often remains truly shocking. En route between Johannesburg and Durban I made a detour through Msinga in KwaZulu/Natal, a mountainous, rural region of great beauty where, in places, ancient African ways persist. For kilometre upon windswept kilometre I drove through a landscape dotted with what at first appeared to be outcrops of rock, or garbage containers, or possibly chicken coups. They proved to be the only shelter for thousands of people who had no visible means of support whatever and waited at the roadside with empty plastic containers for a water tanker that was nowhere in sight. People are arriving here even now because there is nowhere else for them to go.

Conditions in Soweto, the huge 'township' near Johannesburg that is actually the biggest city in Southern Africa, are by no means as bad as this. Yet the way it exists – almost covertly, without an accurate street plan or proper signposting – is somehow no less shocking. Soweto remains hidden away, a guilty secret, behind the gold-mine slag heaps that surround Johannesburg, off a highway down a side road. Its monochrome, regimented roofs cover featureless hills, glistening in the sun like the damp furrows of a freshly ploughed field.

A family I visited there lives in a relatively spacious house in a pleasant neighbourhood. I asked the matriarch of the household when she had first moved to her home and she replied: 'You mean, when was I *put* here?' It takes a while to acclimatize yourself to a country where the bulk of the population seems to have been 'removed' from here, 'resettled' there, picked up, put down, sent back, moved on across a land that is still partitioned everywhere by walls and barbed wire to keep people in – or to keep them out.

Something like half the people of working age in South Africa – there are no accurate official figures[1] – are without formal employment of any kind. Urban employment in manufacturing industry has stagnated or declined as a prolonged economic recession persists. South Africa's imminent integration into the world economy promises to make things worse. Massive 'structural adjustment' will close down factories and privatize the huge state-owned sector. 'Retrenchment' – that weasel corporate euphemism for mass redundancy – seems bound to increase as a result. Even the mining industry, a key player in orthodox economic strategies of 'export-led growth', has lost upwards of 200,000 jobs in the past three years, largely because of rising costs in gold mining.[2]

The ANC set out for the elections with a Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP) that would have made a difference. The original RDP, now much revised, aimed to promote development by directing resources from the mis-spent wealth of apartheid towards the impoverished majority, particularly women – thereby stimulating the economy as a whole.

> What was most remarkable about the black South Africans I talked to was the great forbearance with which they endured the dreadful conditions of their lives

For its first year the Government of National Unity has, however, been confined to a budget fixed by its apartheid predecessor. There has been no recognition from the world 'community' that the South African people now need urgent assistance with reconstruction along the lines of the post-war Marshall Plan in Europe. Voluntary organizations have meanwhile been starved of cash and some face possible extinction because donors assume that a 'new' South Africa has arrived already.

The minister responsible for the RDP, Jay Naidoo, says that his targets have been met nonetheless. More than half its $500 million budget has, he says, been spent on 22 special projects identified by President Mandela – $125 million alone on free health care for children and pregnant mothers. 'People are making an assumption that the RDP is about them sitting back and expecting Government to deliver, that the RDP is about charity,' pleads Naidoo. 'We have to dispel that. The RDP is about partnership.'[3]

Widespread concern is routinely expressed that popular 'expectations' are 'unrealistic' – that after the long years of struggle and suffering people expect 'their' government to deliver at a stroke. My own observations suggested something rather different. What was most remarkable about the black South Africans I talked to was the great forbearance with which they endured the dreadful conditions of their lives. Decent education, the restoration of what has been stolen, self-respect, equity, participation in decision-making – these are the things they care about, not immediate access for all to the latest Sony gizmo.. 'At least now we can make a *case*,' said Gabriel, a gold miner living in a hostel camp near Johannesburg.

Expectations like these are, it seems to me, a good deal more 'realistic' than those of the beneficiaries of apartheid, who for the most part appear to believe that they can maintain their own affluent lifestyles intact. Such people also tend to want to 'let bygones be bygones'. They can probably count for support on the quite extraordinary capacity of black South Africans for forgiveness.

But forgiveness is not the same thing as forgetfulness. No-one seems to know exactly how many people were murdered, tortured, beaten, imprisoned, exiled or falsely accused – and by whom – under the apartheid regime. No-one, that is, except their children, lovers, fathers, mothers, brothers, sisters, friends or 'comrades' who do not have the option to ignore the evidence. For them, a 'new' South Africa is about nothing if it is not about this – about reaching for the truth, if only so that such things might never be repeated.

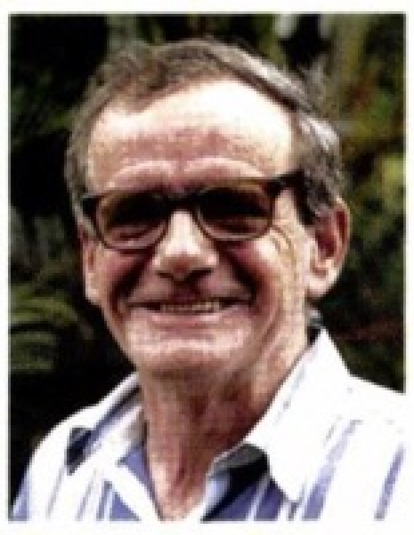
A 'Truth and Reconciliation Commission' is intended to set the record straight. But General Constand Viljoen – who was commander of the South African Defence Force (SADF) in the violent lead-up to the elections – has already dismissed the Commission as 'anti-Afrikaner'. He has also asserted that since it was he who gave the orders none of his subordinates in the SADF can be brought to justice without him. He is not seeking martyrdom. As a general and a leader of right-wing Afrikanerdom he apparently considers himself to be untouchable.

In January 1995 a secret deal done on the eve of the elections in April 1994 came to light. Some 3,500 police officers and two former cabinet ministers – Pik Botha,

FRAGMENTS OF THE DAWN

Africa, I presume

***Cosmas Desmond's* knowledge of geography may not be up to scratch, but he knows a heathen when he sees one, even if the jungle turns out to be made of concrete.**



Being the product of what was rather arrogantly called a 'classical' education – all Greek and Latin – I have very little knowledge of geography. Perhaps that is why I have always laboured under what is obviously a misapprehension – that South Africa is a part of Africa.

When I arrived, in 1959, I fully expected to hear lions roaring on the perimeter of the airport and then to hack my way through the bush to my mission station – for I came as a missionary priest. In my innocence or ignorance I really thought I was coming to Africa to convert the heathen hordes. Instead I found that the jungle was concrete and that the heathens were white.

Most blacks are still expected, even today, to accept that they are inferior. Listen to the comments in bars or supermarkets. A slight delay at the bread counter: 'And they think they can run the country?' 'They've had their election. What more do they want?' 'They are used to poverty.' 'They wouldn't know what to do with a proper house if they were given one.' It's just like England, where the working class used to be accused of storing coal in the bath, even though most of us did not have a bath and could not afford to buy coal.

Most whites are as racist as they ever were, even if there are individuals who have been liberated by the changes. If blacks are rich enough to conform they are acceptable. If they are not – and most are not – they remain outcasts. Whites set the standard: 'African' still means 'second-rate'.

Perhaps the greatest tragedy of the 'new' South Africa is its rejection of its African past – by virtually all whites and even by many blacks. Tokyo Sexwale, the Premier of the Gauteng (Johannesburg/Pretoria) region, even cited the monstrous, pseudo-African Sun City as the standard to which everyone should aspire. What people have is more important than what they are; if they *have* nothing, they *are* nothing. The more important you are the more things you must have: bigger houses, bigger cars, bigger salaries and even bigger egos.

But Africa's greatest contribution to humanity is its humanity. In the African society in which I lived for 10 years there was a quality of life that more than compensated for the material discomforts. Apartheid destroyed much of that way of life. We need to rebuild it, not replace it with a Coca Cola civilization.

Whites, too, might be pleasantly surprised to realize the truth of the old adage: 'Half a loaf eaten in freedom is better than a whole loaf eaten in slavery.' In their case the enslavement is to security firms and guns. There might be a little chaos – only dictators can install perfect order. But to my mind it's less important that the train runs on time than that the passengers arrive at their destination.

The time has now come for whites to recognize that being part of Africa is not simply a geographic fact – it is, isn't it? It means having different values: putting people before things.

***Cosmas Desmond's** life as a missionary came to an end when he was held under house arrest by the apartheid regime. In the 1994 elections he stood as a Pan Africanist Congress candidate – the only white to do so. He lives with his family in Durban.*

J NACHTWEY / MAGNUM

Gathering storm: life in this hostel in Guguletu, near Cape Town, remains bleak while a small minority scale new heights of conspicuous consumption.

HENNER FRANKENFELD / SOUTHLIGHT

the long-serving apartheid Foreign Minister and now Minister of Energy and Mines, and Adriaan Vlok, the hated apartheid Minister of the Interior – have apparently been offered immunity from prosecution. Vlok is, among other things, implicated in the bombing of the offices of the South African Council of Churches in 1988 – and is accused of trying to incriminate a young ANC activist into the bargain. The extreme touchiness on this matter of FW de Klerk, the last apartheid President and now Deputy Vice-President, shows how much of the old South Africa lives on in the new.

In one very limited respect, however, change has been quite dramatic. Some black people have been getting very rich indeed. The process accelerated perceptibly after last April's elections when the 'gravy train' of government patronage began to pull out of the station. Everyone who is not a direct beneficiary seems to agree that 'corruption' poses the single most potent threat to the new regime. But the issue goes wider than this.

'Once, if you saw a BMW on the road you knew it belonged to a white,' a young man from Soweto said to me. 'That used to keep blacks together. Now you can't be sure. Black people drive BMWs too. We are confused.'

Of course blacks have just as much right to drive BMWs as whites: the principles of non-discrimination require that they should have equal access to resources. But blacks who get rich are, in practice, joining with whites in the ruling class of a capitalist system that still works in essentially the same way as it did under apartheid. All that happens is that blacks show themselves to be just as competent at exploiting others as whites – hardly a fresh discovery. Nothing of any material consequence changes for the black majority.

Such a 'new' South Africa has the advantage that it can be arranged with ease, since it corresponds closely with current international orthodoxy and with the way the place already looks. If there is to be a genuinely new South Africa, however, it will have to be about something different. That means, for the majority of South Africans, the politics not of race but of class – of creating equal access to resources for *all* South Africans, most of whom are poor.

Nelson Mandela asks in vain to be treated as a human being rather than a myth

After all, it was not Nelson Mandela – as he would be the first to acknowledge – nor even the ANC who overthrew apartheid. That was achieved by the people of South Africa as a whole. The ANC was an amorphous liberation movement that is now finding its rebirth as a political party extremely difficult to accomplish. Nelson Mandela asks in vain to be treated as a human being rather than a myth. He is an extraordinary figure. But he is less extraordinary when you realize that he is, in his approach to life, broadly characteristic of the South African people as a whole. That is what gives him his strength.

In his autobiography, *Long Walk to Freedom*, he writes: 'No-one is born hating another person... People must learn to hate, and if they can learn to hate, they can be taught to love.' It would be easier to dismiss such sentiments had they come from anyone other than Nelson Mandela or from anywhere other than South Africa.

What this country now has is something far more precious to the world than its material wealth. 'Ordinary' people there have tasted their own power. What kept them going during all those years of seemingly futile resistance was not the prospect of immediate material gain. It was something more profound than that – a distinctive set of values. You do not have to revert to mystical notions of African tradition to see such values at work around you everywhere in South Africa today and to realize why the struggle finally had to succeed.

So I thought again about what Archie Gumede had told me in Durban. I saw that I had not understood. Liberation and freedom are invisible; they reside in the human spirit. Though liberation from apartheid has come, the freedom to live by different values has yet to be established. The new South Africa is being shaped by all sorts of forces: by the narrow orthodoxy of the world economy and – God help us – by the World Bank; by personal ambition, for sure, and by the most urgent basic needs. But anyone who thinks there is no more to it than this would also doubtless have concluded that apartheid would endure for ever.

'I am retiring in order to advance,' the veteran Walter Sisulu announced to the ANC Conference just before Christmas last year. Perhaps the South African people are following his example. They have emerged – without the predicted bloodbath – elated, weary and sometimes bemused, as if from a nightmare into a new dawn. They may be savouring the peace, the ambiguous pleasures of a realized dream. But new dreams grow from the old, and who in South Africa now can be sure that they too will not eventually be realized? ■

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1 A figure between 40 and 50 per cent is suggested by the most authoritative independent source, *Making democracy work – a framework for macroeconomic policy in South Africa*, MERG, Cape Town, 1993. **2** See 'Gold without glister' on Page 28 of this issue. **3** *The Star*, Johannesburg, 15 December 1994.

The Sisterly Republic

There may be teething troubles in the world's first 'non-sexist' state but, as **Ferial Haffajee** reports, women are rolling up their sleeves and getting on with the job of creating a 'female-friendly' country.

THE lot of African women rivals the worst oppression in the world. Yet South African sisters stand poised to create something new. The political settlement has brought in its wake a commitment from the new Government to gender equality and women's empowerment. This new land has, after all, officially been baptized the 'non-racial, non-sexist Republic of South Africa'.

One in four of the country's new Members of Parliament is a woman – the seventh largest number in the world – and so are three of its cabinet ministers. Numbers aside, the new Constitution also makes provision for a Gender Commission to ensure that the Government breathes life into the 'non-sexist' commitment. Every aspect of the Reconstruction and Development Programme states specifically how it will benefit women. And just before it was voted into power last year the ANC committed itself to a wide-ranging and forward-looking Women's Charter of Rights and Effective Equality.

But we are now one year into the new South Africa and these still remain pretty paper concepts. The sisters just haven't started doing it for themselves. They're the first to admit it. Bridget Mabandla is an ANC MP and is touted as the head of the Gender Commission when it's eventually established. She says: 'We've been slow at building on our gains. There's no firm caucus yet and if we had been organized we'd have improved our interventions. But governance is new to all of us. We were a bit dazed initially.'

Cathy Albertyn of the Gender Research Project at Witwatersrand University says the new MPs

SHARON BASELEY / FORMAT

entered an unfriendly parliamentary environment. Not only were they on virgin territory for women, but that territory was also occupied by a phalanx of hostile (and often sexist) civil servants.

Pregs Govender, a young trade unionist, entered Parliament on a women's ticket – women in the ANC lobbied for a 30-percent quota on their party's lists. The story of her induction into parliamentary life illustrates just how hostile the terrain was for women. On the day before Parliament started she went there for a briefing and was huffily told that the session was 'for MPs only'. It got worse. The next day she took her (white male) partner along for the first sitting. At the entrance the young clerk informed her that 'wives sit upstairs'. Albertyn says that women spent much of the first year making Parliament more women-friendly. For example, they've had to start a crèche and make sure that more toilets are provided for women.

'We transformed the parliamentary tradition,' says Mabandla, adding 'and we bamboozled the other parties. Not only with our garb, but they had never seen so many articulate women in Parliament.' One of the most memorable moments was the sight of Deputy President (and former President) FW de Klerk bowing before the sari-clad Speaker of Parliament, Frene Ginwala.

Triple oppression

Such symbolic power-gains for women are important, yet they mean little for ordinary women who have seen few changes in their day-to-day lives. Many will call it trite to say that the majority of South African women suffer a triple oppression – they're black, working-class and women. Trite it may be, but it's still sorely apparent.

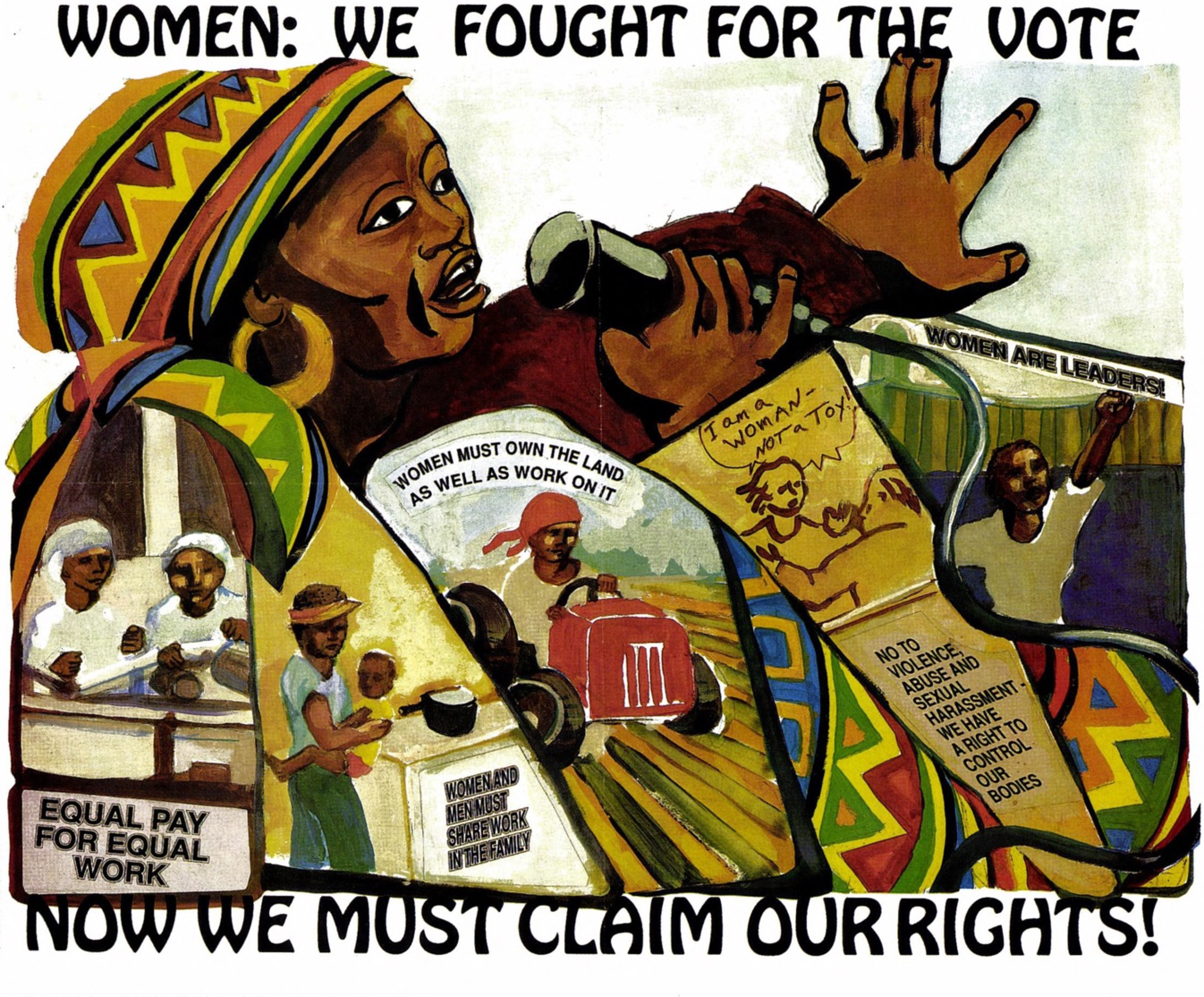
Black women make up the majority of the unemployed. Those who have jobs tend to be in the lowest-paying categories like domestic and farm work. A recent study found that of 27,192 artisans across the country's major industries only 61 were women. Women continue to preside over the majority of the poorest rural households where many spend half their days collecting firewood and water. Politically, most rural women live under the yoke of traditional leaders who control their access to resources; and they are bound by discriminatory marital and property laws.

Arguably the biggest blight on the new South Africa is the violence its women experience. Rape has become endemic – in 1993 there were over 28,000 recorded cases. The reason cited for half the divorce cases in the same year was domestic violence.

It is with some frustration that Lisa Vetton, a young rape counsellor from People Opposing Women Abuse (POWA) says: 'The Government has set up commissions around abortion and censorship, so I see no reason why rape can't follow.'

POWA and a range of other women's organizations have been campaigning for decades for a fundamental change to rape law in South Africa. They assumed that they would find a sympathetic ear and quick

The next step; posters point the way forward.


WOMEN: WE FOUGHT FOR THE VOTE
WOMEN ARE LEADERS!
I am a WOMAN- NOT a Toy!
WOMEN MUST OWN THE LAND AS WELL AS WORK ON IT
NO TO VIOLENCE, ABUSE AND SEXUAL HARASSMENT - WE HAVE A RIGHT TO CONTROL OUR BODIES
EQUAL PAY FOR EQUAL WORK
WOMEN AND MEN MUST SHARE WORK IN THE FAMILY
NOW WE MUST CLAIM OUR RIGHTS!

SPEAK MAGAZINE

action from the new Government. But the issue hasn't been raised in Parliament, even by women MPs.

The teething troubles of the new Parliament are not the only problem. Other factors include the relatively junior positions most women occupy and the fact that the new Government has thus far paid little more than lip service to establishing the mechanisms that will give life to gender equality.

Cathy Albertyn notes that few women have been elected to chair the all-important parliamentary standing committees, where both policy and draft laws are carved out. She's also concerned that 'no-one has taken political responsibility for driving the process'. The Gender Commission and the women's desks in every ministry, which will be instrumental in carrying out women-friendly policies, are not on the parliamentary drawing board yet. 'There's not even a budget for the Gender Commission,' says Albertyn.

Snail's pace

Women in Parliament are going to pull up their socks, hitch up their kaftans and lobby hard to drive through essential reforms and to establish the mechanisms which will take women's equality from theory to practice. But Albertyn says the snail's pace at which gender reform has gone is not just the fault of those in government.

'What the experience showed is not only the level of disorganization of women in government and Parliament, but also the level of disorganization (of women) in civil society; because we should have lobbied for it more strongly in a more organized fashion.' But active women in civil society joined the Government *en masse* after the election. Those who weren't elected to office were poached from non-governmental organizations, unions and political groups by the Government in its search for the new blood it so badly needed. Women's organizations that had kept the gender flame burning suffered the loss of both key staff and funding, as aid agencies began channelling money straight to the now-legitimate Government.

The Women's National Coalition, which did ground-breaking work in organizing women prior to the election, ground to a halt as the cream of its leadership was elected to Parliament. The Coalition was a brave experiment in cross-party solidarity. Established in 1991 to draft a new charter of women's rights, it drew in women from all major political parties and across all sectors, from trade unionists to academics and business executives. Although it is still limping along, the Coalition has buckled under the strain of party interests being placed before sisterly solidarity.

Women in South Africa have historically organized through the liberation movements, which have now become political parties. 'Gender was subsumed to national liberation because people responded to the more obvious source of oppression, which was race rather than gender,' says Albertyn. Many women feel that progress will best be achieved by remaining in this political mainstream. They argue that trying to forge national unity among women in a country with schisms of race and class like South Africa is doomed. A young woman activist says: 'We need to network around specific issues and form local coalitions around abortion, employment, health or whatever.'

Strong lobby

But there's a growing lobby that says South Africa needs an independent women's movement. Debbie Bonnin is one of the editors of the feminist journal *AGENDA*. She argues that there is an over-reliance on women MPs and that 'we should form a national independent women's movement which will put the interests of women first, as opposed to the interests of political parties, churches or unions'.

This vigorous and public debate about the best way forward for South Africa's women marks the revitalization of their struggle for a better life. In it is perhaps the beginning of a strong women's lobby which will keep the parliamentary sisters on their toes. But they too are catching on to the fact that women can organize across party lines. Bridget Mabandla says they've begun negotiations for a multi-party caucus in Parliament: 'If our focus is on the nation, we need to think of a broader forum.'

Even more heartening are the signs that women outside Parliament are also mustering their forces. Late last year POWA held a public, no-holds-barred 'Speak Out' on rape. Five women who had been raped told their stories in public. One had been pulled from a car one night and gang-raped. Another had been brutally beaten and repeatedly raped by her husband. Their shocking stories, told to the public in front of their MPs, were an urgent and eloquent demand for law reform.

In the same week women in the rural area of Moutse started their own radio station. The first broadcast was a party and great fun. Now the station's going to be used as a development tool. It will tell women about everything from new health-care programmes to the best ways of fencing off their land.

South African women are finding their voices. Those voices need to boom out so that women can seize the moment and reap the benefits that their newly-won democracy has to offer. ■

Ferial Haffajee is a radio journalist. She is based in Johannesburg.

FRAGMENTS OF THE DAWN

Our oppressed minds

***Baby Tyawa*, a young activist in the 1980s and now an educational psychologist, reflects on the problems of adjusting to liberation.**

Things changed here with dramatic speed. During the 1980s we were worried that there was going to be a lot of turmoil and confrontation. Although there is some level of confrontation now, it's of a different type. At that time we were always taking to the streets – and I agreed with that. But since 1990 I always want to say: 'Why can't people sit down and discuss some of the problems we encounter?'

For years repression has taught us to resist. Even now we still believe that we should keep pushing. We cannot connect the idea of freedom with reality. For example, I talked to a union of prisoners and they demanded that *all* prisoners should be free. And I remember thinking: 'If that is freedom, if that is democracy, then it's a problem.'

The priority is for all citizens to know their rights. By knowing your rights you are then able to understand the limits to those rights. Sometimes we get confused by the mechanisms we use – by 'resistance' we mean taking to the streets. I'm sure we've never known any other way. I think there has to be a concerted programme of teaching us how to use other channels to raise our problems, our resistance, in a way that does not disrupt our advance.

I am not saying we should all be 'cleaned up' and become 'college people'. We call ourselves a more democratic society and we should start there, with all the people. It's a process of education – and I do not see it starting yet.

What I would like to do is incorporate my political ideas within my profession as an educational psychologist. When I was an activist I would go to conferences, I would spread my energy. Now I want to focus on what I am qualified to do. I want to work on our attitudes, our oppressed minds. I think if I don't incorporate my political ideas within my profession I'll be missing the point. But I'm not going to lose my political background. ■

***Baby Tyawa** acted as researcher on the NI's 1987 film* Girls Apart.

Colour-blind **capitalism**

In 1986 revolutionary thinker, educationalist and former Robben Island prisoner *Neville Alexander* told the NI that 'people's expectations have been raised to a point where a black capitalist government wouldn't be able to satisfy them'. Is that true now?

WE were clear, even in 1986, that it was merely a matter of time before apartheid was overthrown. But none of us foresaw two things. One was that the 'serious' right-wing people like General Viljoen and the whole group of generals around him would be willing to bargain. We expected them to fight it out. The other was the extent to which the ANC would be ready to make compromises on issues of principle.

I know Mandela very well. He's essentially a pragmatist, somebody who is not married to any particular idea in an irrevocable way – though he is clearly against racism and prepared to struggle for a non-racial solution.

The one thing you have to understand about the ANC strategy is that they want to avoid a civil war at all costs. They are prepared to compromise on virtually everything in order to avoid that. Their real problem is the right wing. They know that as time goes on it will become more and more difficult for the right wing, the repressive apparatus, to cause serious trouble. At the moment – as I think I was the first in this country to say – the ANC have come into office but not into power. They want to move as quickly as possible from one to the other, but until then they will vacillate and try to neutralize any potential eruptions.

PAUL VELASCO / SOUTHLIGHT

There has been in South Africa, let's say for the last decade and a half, a kind of message of redemption – liberation in a broad sense. As long as capitalism was clearly equated with the racism of apartheid, socialism was the antithesis. Today, because blacks are in office and also associated with capitalism, this is no longer so.

Black consciousness, African nationalism and so on have come to the end of the road because they have compromised with capitalism. The aura around the ANC in particular – but also around the Pan Africanist Congress and the Azanian Peoples Organization – is going to evaporate. Middle-class blacks are beginning to identify with the system. That system is now a capitalist system, not simply the racist one of apartheid. More and more black workers, urban and rural poor, are beginning to realize that the colour of the exploiter has changed, that the system is colour-blind and that they've now got to fight the system, not the whites.

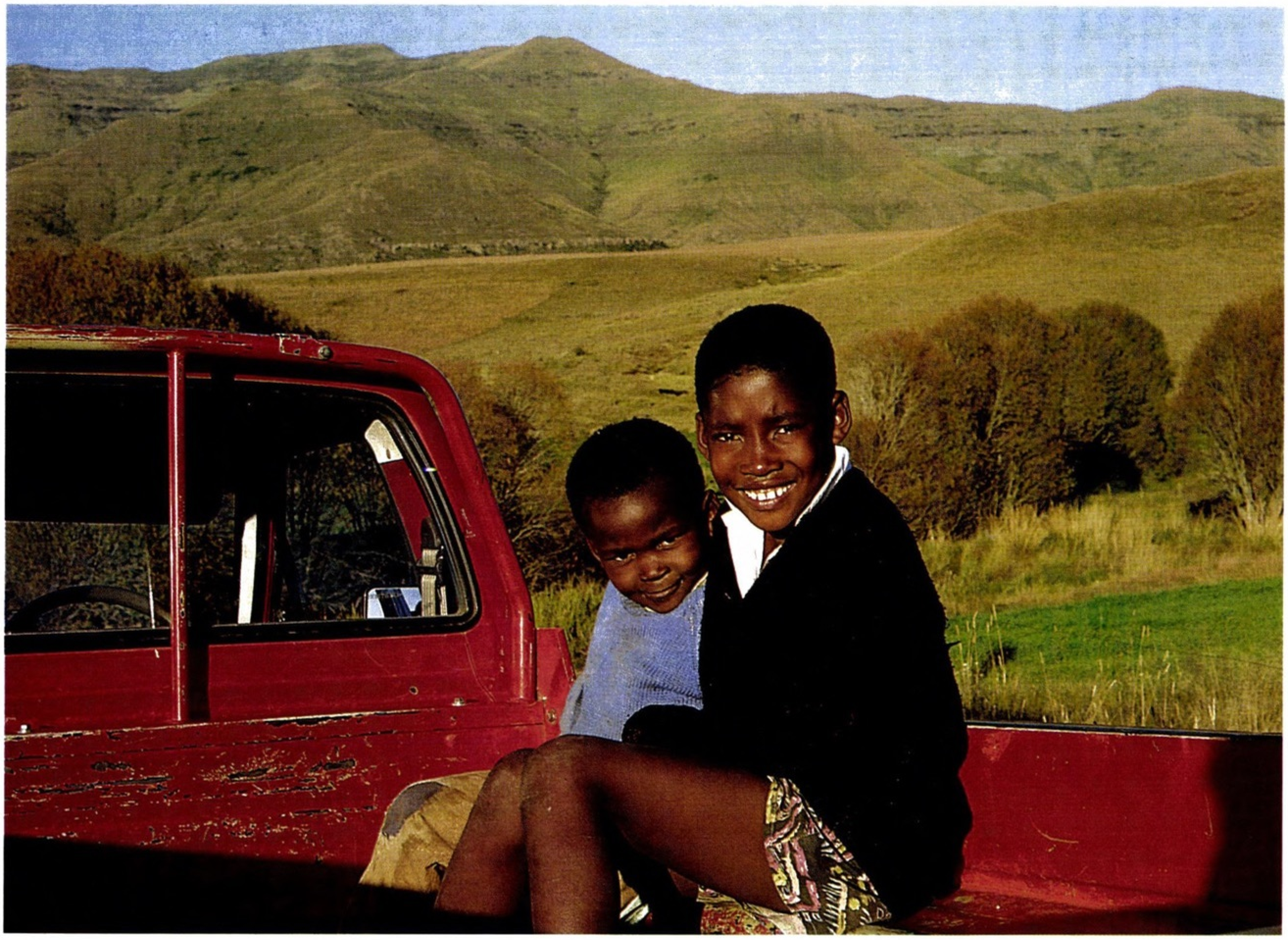
So I think the basis is there for a workers' party, a broadly anti-capitalist movement. Workers *have* to be able to project themselves politically, and they can only do so through an independent workers' party. It has happened in Brazil, it has happened in other countries and South Africa is going to follow suit.

If the system remains stable then the ANC can maintain power for a very long time. The most stabilizing thing that could happen would be a 'noble gesture' on the part of the leadership of the wealthy. If symbolically important white leaders were to say: 'We are prepared to call on all the people who have been beneficiaries of apartheid to allow themselves to be taxed at least one or two per cent for 10 years, with a view to augmenting the Reconstruction and Development Programme fund,' that would, I think, do most towards stabilizing the situation. But these fellows just haven't thought of it. Not even the Church, by the way, has suggested such a gesture.

Stability also depends upon economic development. The ANC originally put forward the notion of 'growth through redistribution'. But they've moved away from that already. Now it's just 'growth *and* redistribution'. The original idea has been thrown away and we're sliding towards so-called 'export-led' growth. So things go on much as before in a sort of 50-per-cent society, with unemployment between 40 and 50 per cent, while in the Eastern Cape, for example, people are virtually destitute.

The political space that has been created by the attainment of the franchise is really tremendous. There's no question that in the long term a transformation is possible. In education, as I know from my own work, there are things you can do now which even a few months ago you wouldn't even have thought of doing. The question is whether such things can become the property of everyone. ■

***Neville Alexander** is Director of the Project for the Study of Alternative Education at the University of Cape Town and Chairperson of the Workers Organization for Socialist Action.*



TROTH WELLS

On the road in a harsh environment: heirs to the earth of the Eastern Cape.

Promised Land

After years of dispossession black people are hungry for land – and reform lies at the heart of the new Government's plans. **Troth Wells** reports from the Eastern Cape on a community which is buying a farm.

THE old man gets to his feet. He brings his hand to his mouth and coughs respectfully. 'I am just seeking clarification about the farm we wish to purchase,' he says. He embellishes his Xhosa words with elegant hand gestures. His husky voice and biblical style of delivery hold the attention of everyone.

We are on a farm in the Eastern Cape. Around the table are members of the Zweledinga Residents' Association (ZRA). Here too are fieldworkers from a local non-governmental organization, the Border Rural Committee (BRC); a lawyer; government officials and planners; and several white farmers.

The ZRA is in the process of acquiring the Gallawater farm from its white owner, Mr King. A youngish man dressed in jeans, thick blue jumper and baseball cap, he knows the members of this community well – perhaps better than he would have wished. They occupied his farm for a spell in 1993.

For all that, both sides like each other. One of the leaders of the land invasion, Godfrey, recalls that time: 'When we entered Gallawater and the farmer came, I thought "this is not the kind of guy to harass". His appearance and the way he talked with us was gentle.'

The members of the ZRA once lived in the Glen Grey district of the Eastern Cape, near the Transkei. In 1975 they learned that their area was to be incorporated into the 'independent' republic of the Transkei. They did not want to live in an area where they would be even poorer and in a place ruled by a repressive chief, so they moved to a spot near Queenstown. By a grotesque twist of fate, the land they had moved to was then incorporated into the 'Republic of Ciskei' which became 'independent' in 1981.

'That was bad enough,' explains Lungile Rex Bokuva, leader of the ZRA. 'But in addition we had not received all the land we had been promised when we made the move. In 1993 we got tired of waiting, tired of the promises of land.' So some of the community moved onto Langedraai farm which the South African Government had bought from a white farmer.

'We want land not just for residential plots but also for farming,' Johnny Ngunuza explains. 'And there is another reason why we need more land. When we moved from Glen Grey our community only numbered about 18,000 people.' Today the community's population has grown to around 35,000. Also some of the land promised to them when they originally moved now has other claims upon it from similarly uprooted groups.

Goats join our circle under a tree outside the Langedraai farmhouse, seeking shade from the burning sun and gusty wind. It's a harsh environment for any would-be farmer. A woman in a floral headscarf speaks to her neighbour and a ripple of dissent goes through the group.

Luvuyo Wotshela, the Border Rural Committee researcher, translates: the community is becoming impatient with the delay in finalizing the purchase of the Gallawater farm. The sale was agreed in August, and it is now December. They want to be in by Christmas. They may even cut a few fences and invade again if nothing happens soon. 'Careful,' jokes Luvuyo, 'don't do any damage – after all it's your farm now!'

Still waiting: Lungile Rex Bokuva on the ZRA farm.

TROTH WELLS

Such complexities surround the long and vexed history of land in South Africa. More than 70 per cent of the black population may now live in towns or large rural settlements, but many still hunger for land. It is a call from the heart as well as from the head, for 'land' has come to mean 'freedom'.

Figures often suggest that whites own 87 per cent of the land and blacks just 13 per cent. These figures exaggerate the true position, since, for example, more than 10 per cent of the 'white' figure includes state-owned land. Nonetheless, black South Africans were systematically deprived of their rights to live and work on the land. So land reform is central to the Government's Reconstruction and Development Programme (RDP), which aims 'to supply land to the poorest section of the rural population and aspirant farmers... (with) security of tenure'. It also aims to remove discrimination against women in gaining access to the land. The new Government's first major piece of legislation, the 1994 Restitution Act, is establishing a Land Claims Commission and a Land Claims Court.

'Careful,' jokes Luvuyo, 'don't do any damage – after all it's your farm now!'

The RDP promises *restitution* for those people who lost land because of apartheid laws. This might seem a clear-cut issue, but the reality is less simple. The long arm of apartheid – and the regimes before it – moved people about for years, creating 'Reserves' and 'Homelands'. So different people often lay claim to the same piece of land. And then, from when should restitution date? The Government will look at claims dating back to the 1913 Natives Land Act. But some – particularly the chiefs through their Congress of Traditional Leaders – are now pressing for restitution to go back to 1652 when Europeans first arrived in the Cape.

The other aspect of land reform is *redistribution* – 'to those in need' as the RDP puts it. This is the heading under which the Zweledinga Residents' Association's claim falls. The ZRA has bought Gallawater through a Government scheme which can provide 80 per cent of the purchase price. But there are snags. The subsidy is limited to $2,000 per household. To buy Gallawater the ZRA will need to place over 100 families (about 600 people) on a piece of ground that used to support just one farmer's family and a few farmworker households.

Such a farm, in this dry, stony region of extreme heat and cold, cannot possibly provide a viable farming life for all of these people. Slicing it up into smallholder units is not the answer since most of the farmland is only suitable for grazing. But about 30 of the farm's 800 hectares are irrigable, and the community hopes to grow vegetables to sell – provided they can raise the cash to pay for irrigation water. At $20 per hectare per year this is a hefty sum for a community already in debt from the purchase itself.

Creating income is therefore crucial for the Zweledinga group, and the Border Rural Committee is putting them in touch with agricultural advisers and other sources of support. Mr King, the former owner, is also ready to help. 'Yes, they've asked my advice already and I have shown them the pumps and the irrigation system,' he says. 'But how on earth can the farm provide for 600 people? We battled to get a living, especially in drought years.'

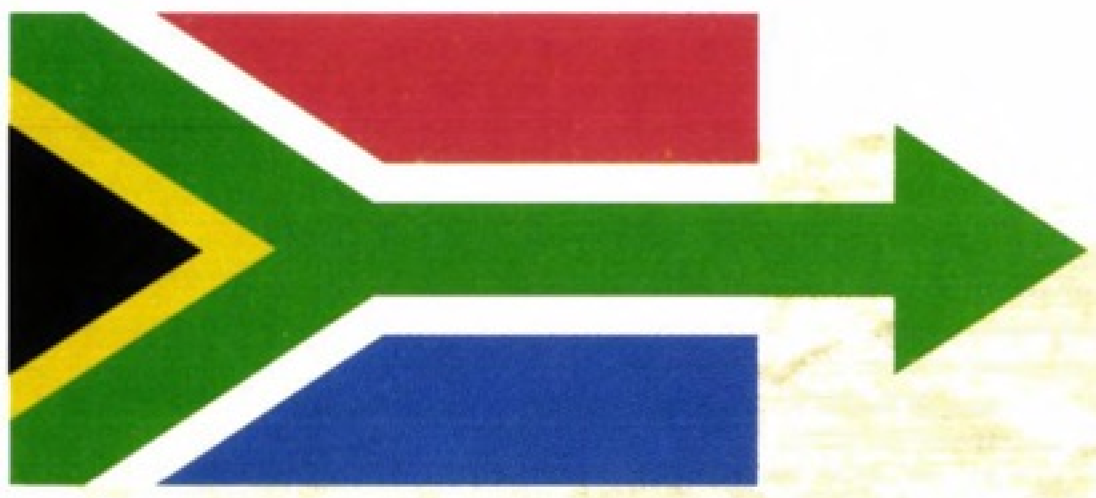
Nonetheless prospects look quite good for the Zweledinga Residents' Association. They are articulate, organized and free from any chief's authority. Gallawater was bought as a Community Land Trust, which gives security of tenure and democratic control while also enabling families to sell out and move if they wish.

For many, communal tenure is the answer to the problems of land reform in South Africa because it should ensure that even the poorest people gain access to land. But commercial production has proved elusive in the extensive and crowded communal-tenure areas such as KwaZulu and Transkei. The chiefs and men who favour the 'traditional' rural lifestyle are rarely the people who walk for hours to collect firewood and water. Nor are they the ones who cultivate maize and vegetables for the family. Invariably it is the women who do this.

The ANC is clear that women must have access to land in their own right. But even among the Zweledinga group only 10 per cent of the owners are female, and these are widows rather than married or single women. 'The men do their part,' says Mrs Dipuku. 'The time has gone when men ran the show.' She laughs and the other women concur. But later the men still sit in a 'meeting' while the women prepare the food and cook the meal.

The new South African Government has astonished the world with its commitment to peace and reconciliation in the country. Everyone hopes it can deliver a new, fair and productive countryside as well. ■

Troth Wells is on the staff of the NI.



Walking on the Moon

Writer *Sindiwe Magona* traces the steps that still have to be taken to reach a new South Africa.

I LOOKED at her. It should have been obvious to any fool that the woman was nearer 70 than 60. But Mamtolwana had not been able to draw her old-age pension. What should have been a simple process was beyond her ability and luck. When she applied for her pass, years and years ago, she'd nodded her head when the clerk told her she was 20 years old. According to that estimate she was now a 50-year-old spring chicken.

The same woman swallowed her teeth. She told me the story herself. She had been eating mealie. She bit off some of the cob and swallowed. Then she bit again, but nothing came off the cob. She tried once more... Realizing something was amiss she quickly ran to a neighbour's house where, she knew, there was a cracked piece of mirror. Her gaping mouth stared right back at her.

That was a long time ago. So many years she has lost count. The hardened gums testify to the time she has endured the hardship. She has no sense of shame, laughing out loud, those bare, pink gums showing. She never thought of getting false teeth. No sane person spends her life thinking that one day she may actually possess the moon.

BERNSTEIN/FSP / GAMMA

'Ndiphila ngecebo likaThixo. I live by the mercy of God.' That is what Mamtolwana said when I asked her what she did for food and other daily needs. That day, 27 April 1994, she had voted for the first time in her life.

I close my eyes and try to see her fighting for the right to false teeth – and for the right to electricity in her home, the right to water in her house. And the picture refuses to be born in my mind. Why would she fight for things when she does not know she has a right to them? Why would she fight when rights are not in her recollection of things she knows, things she does, things people like her do? How can she do something that is so completely foreign to her? And do it with ease?

And that is what I fear. The steps you have to take to avail yourself of the opportunity the new South Africa promises all its people, simple as they appear to be, may be too much for people who have no memory of ever walking them.

For democracy to flourish the prerequisite is vigilance. In the new South Africa those who have the political skills and knowledge are mesmerized by the new order, too busy forgiving wrongdoers who have no names, forgiving them sins that have been acknowledged but not atoned for.

Good will alone is never enough. Once upon a time each of the free countries of Africa also stood on the threshold of a great future – full of hope, the vision bright as the morning star. Why then are people fleeing countries that have been drinking from the fountain of freedom for decades and coming to an infant democracy in South Africa?

We are people who name a child after a significant event around her birth. One born during a drought might be named *Nombalela*; she who came at a time of war, *Nomfazwe*. And the belief is that the predominant characteristic at the time of birth will be a major influence in her life. The new South Africa, let us remember, came into being as mass killings eclipsed the African sun from the skies of Rwanda.

In April last year when I thought of the meaning of the new order I wondered how, with apartheid gone, we would account for our failures. Whom or what would we blame? The effects of the deliberate dwarfing of a people will not be overcome overnight. All the new order brings, all it can bring, is but the franchise. Real change in the way we live our lives will take a generation. It could take longer.

No people can be propelled forward without their active engagement. The deeper the hole in which one is sunk the greater the effort that has to be expended to extricate oneself. The people of South Africa need to hear that call often and loudly. Show the people the road they must travel. Remove the hobbles from their bound feet. Watch them run! ■

***Sindiwe Magona** is a South African writer now living in New York. Her collected short stories and her autobiography* Forced To Grow *are published by The Women's Press in Britain.*

THE NEW **SOUTH AFRICA**

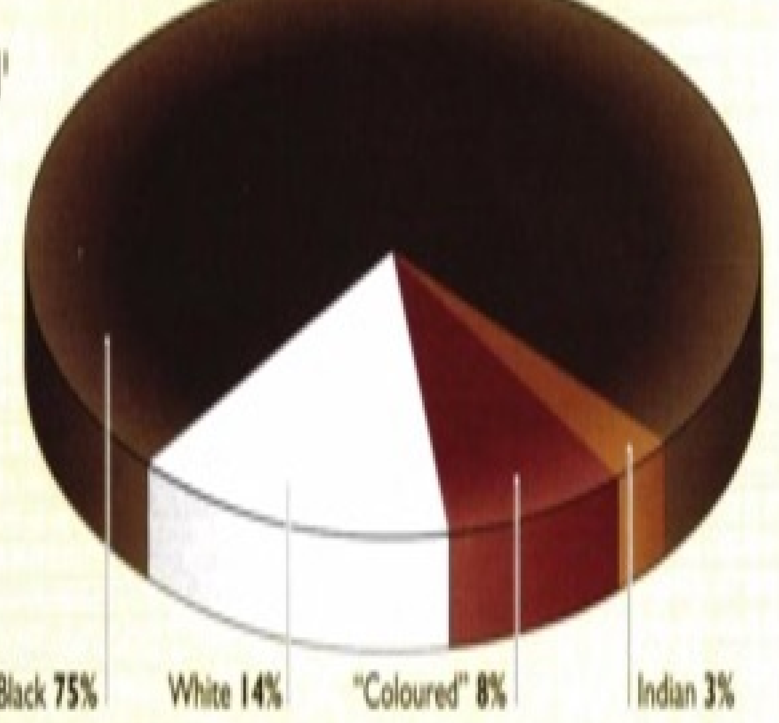
THE FACTS

Black South Africans are joining the middle class – and some are getting very rich indeed. But the legacy of apartheid means that the gulf between most blacks and most whites remains vast.

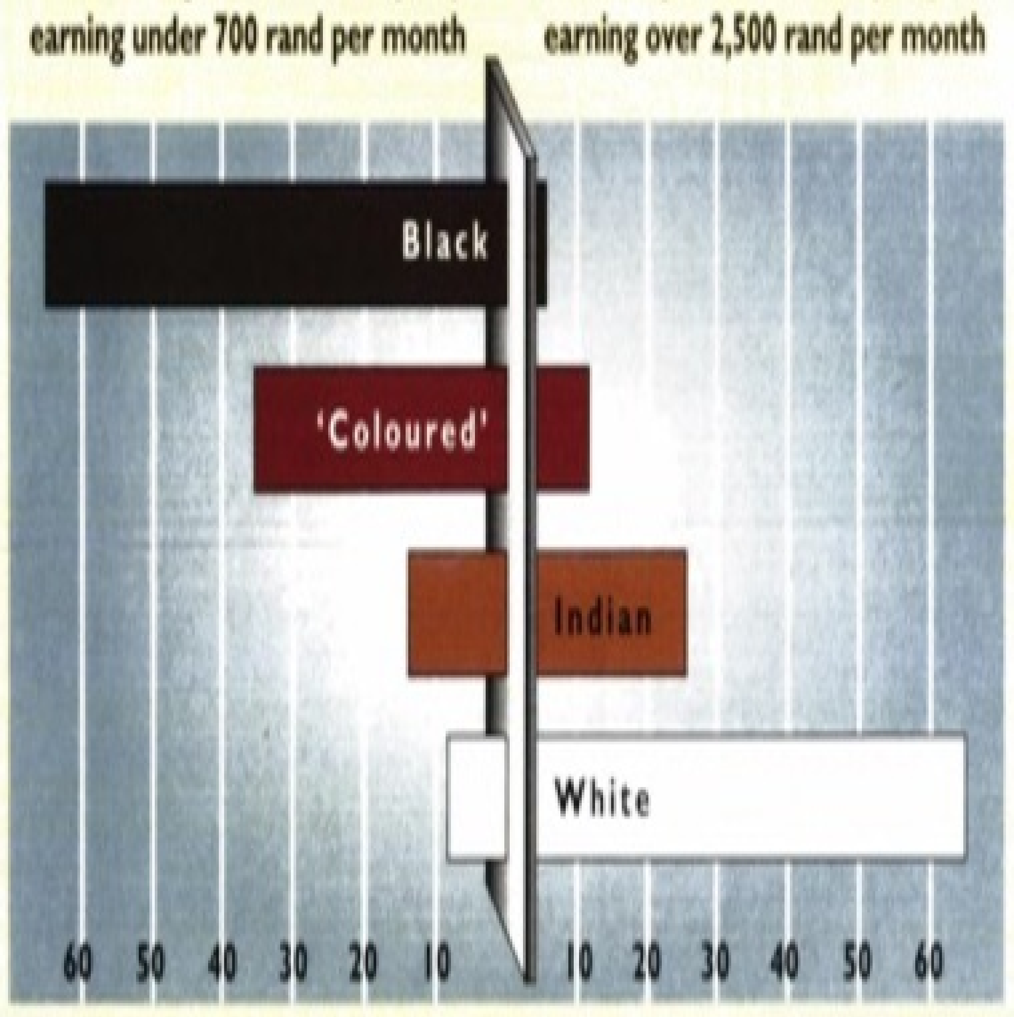
THE RICH AND THE POOR

POPULATION[1]

Total estimate
38.9 million



MONTHLY HOUSEHOLD INCOME[2]

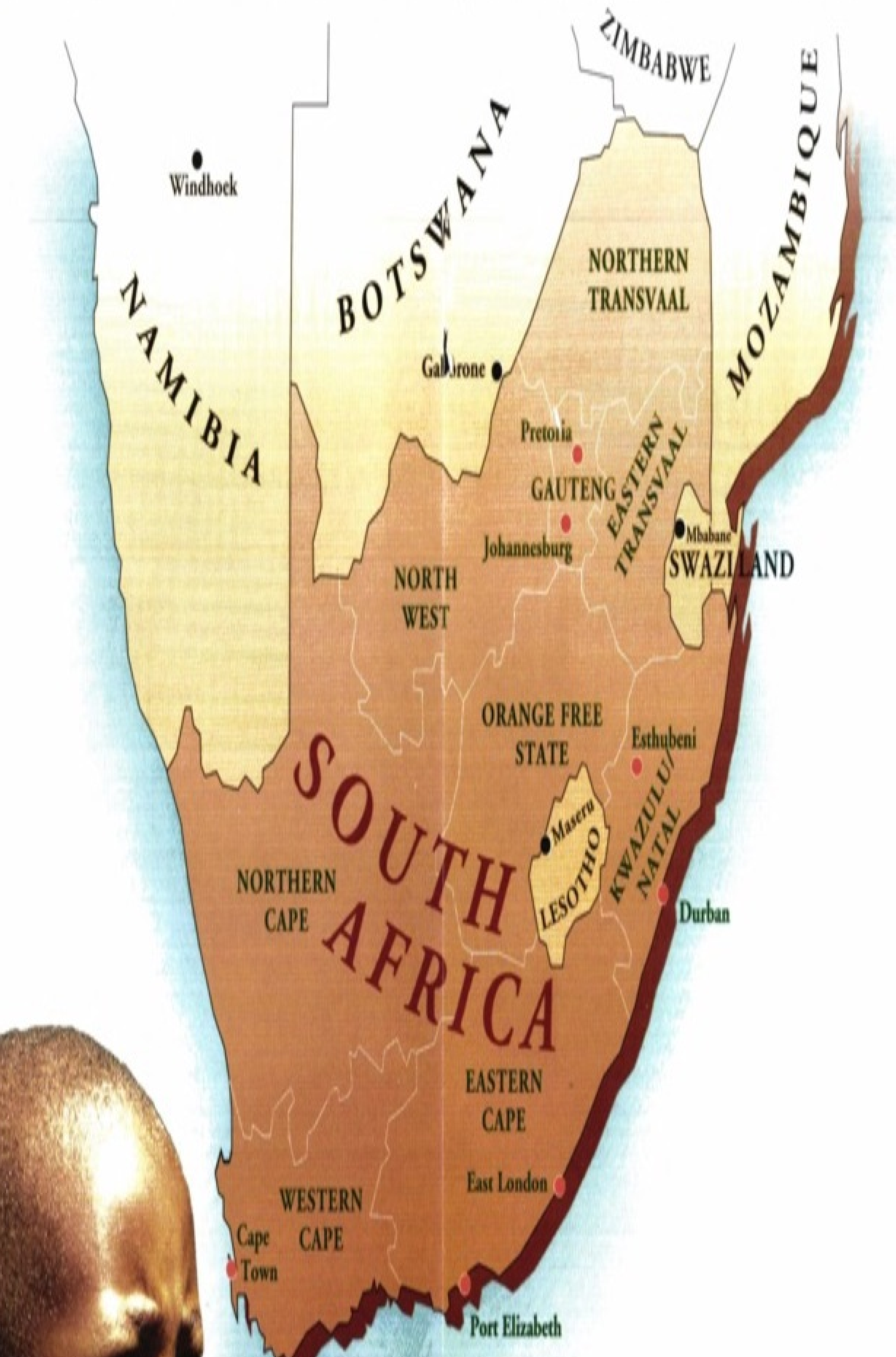


HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

If separately accounted for, white and black South Africans end up with radically different positions on the UN Human Development Index, which merges income per capita, life expectancy and literacy to give a sense of a country's quality of life.[3]

RANK	Country	Index Rating
1	Canada	0.932
23	Spain	0.888
White South Africans		**0.878**
24	Hong Kong	0.875
54	Thailand	0.798
93	**South Africa**	**0.650**
94	China	0.644
122	Cape Verde	0.474
Black South Africans		**0.462**
123	Congo	0.461
173	Guinea	0.191

SOUTHLIGHT



LANDLOCKED

- The Land Act of 1913 and subsequent racist legislation prevented the vast majority of South Africans from owning or even leasing land anywhere in the country, in urban or rural areas – giving rise to the most unequal system of land distribution in the world.

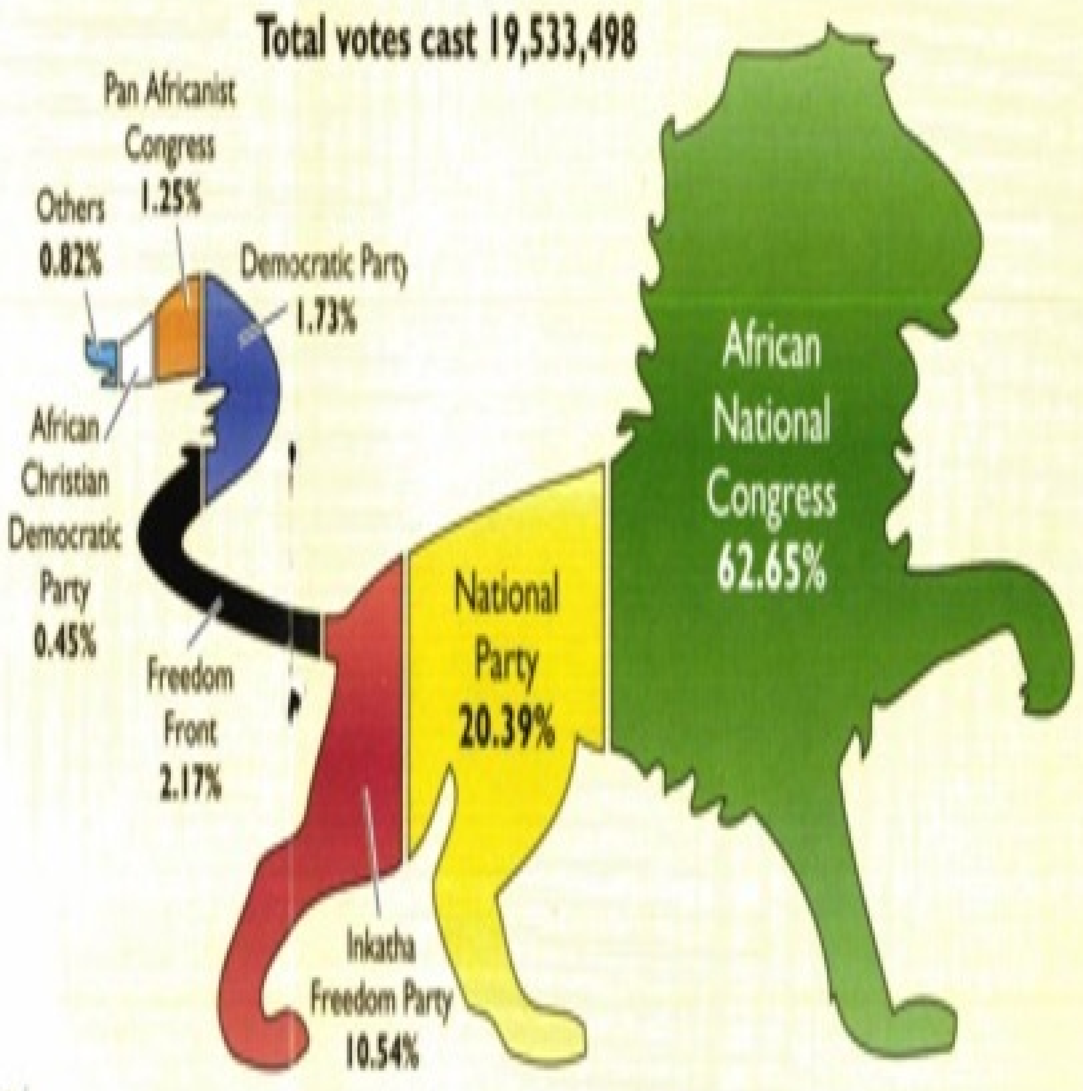
- Rural populations have been concentrated in 'homelands' and other designated areas, leading to severe overpopulation and soil erosion. Msinga in KwaZulu, for example, contains seven times as many people and animals as can be sustained agriculturally, according to a government commission.
- The amount of arable land per capita in white rural areas is 12 times greater than in black areas.
- Only 14 per cent of rural dwellers have access to adequate sanitation.[5]

NANCY DURRELL-McKENNA / PANOS
HENNER FRANKENFELD / SOUTHLIGHT

THE YOUNG LION OF AFRICA

The Government of National Unity that took office in April 1994 does not exactly reflect the election results – the ANC majority has allocated some Cabinet posts to National Party and Inkatha representatives on the basis of backroom deals rather than on strict proportionality.[7]

Total votes cast 19,533,498



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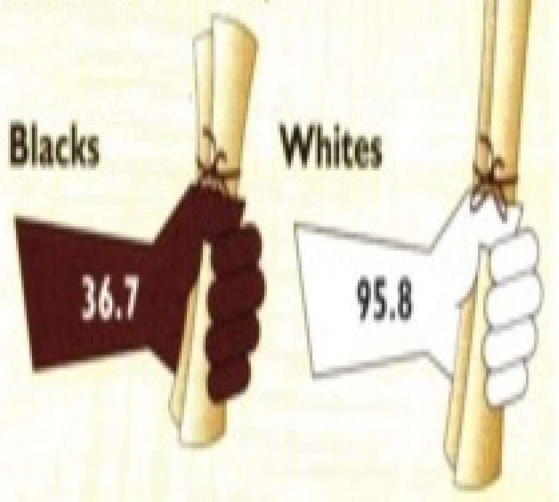
1 *Africa Review 1995*. 2 *The Legacy of Apartheid* (Guardian Books, London 1994). 3 *Human Development Report 1994*, UNDP (OUP New York & Oxford). 4 *World Development Report 1993*, World Bank (OUP New York & Oxford). 5 *Making Democracy Work*, Macro-Economic Research Group (Cape Town 1993). 6 *Uprooting Poverty*, Francis Wilson and Mamphela Ramphele (WW Norton, New York and London 1989). 7 *Election '94 South Africa*, ed. Andrew Reynolds (David Philip, Cape Town and Johannesburg 1994).

THE CLASS OF 1990

Spending on education for the black majority was minimal in the apartheid years: as a result 86 per cent of black schools are still not connected to the electricity grid. In the former 'homelands' the number of pupils per teacher can be as high as 70. So blacks have little chance of matching white exam results.[5]

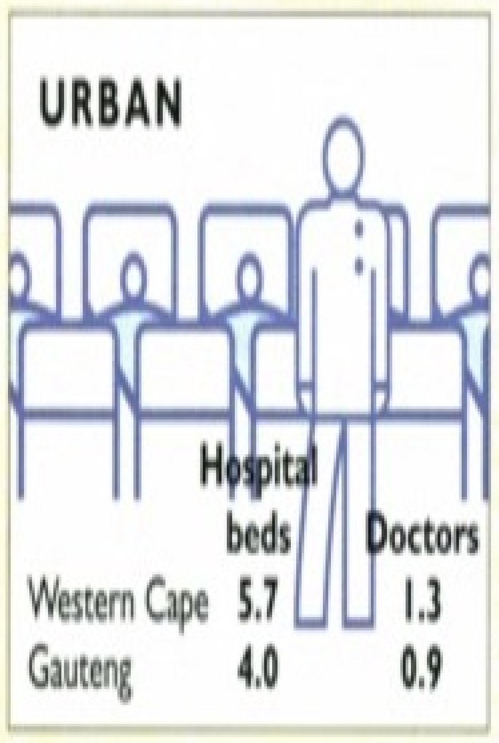
PERCENTAGE PASSING STANDARD 10 EXAMINATIONS, 1990



UNEQUAL HEALTH

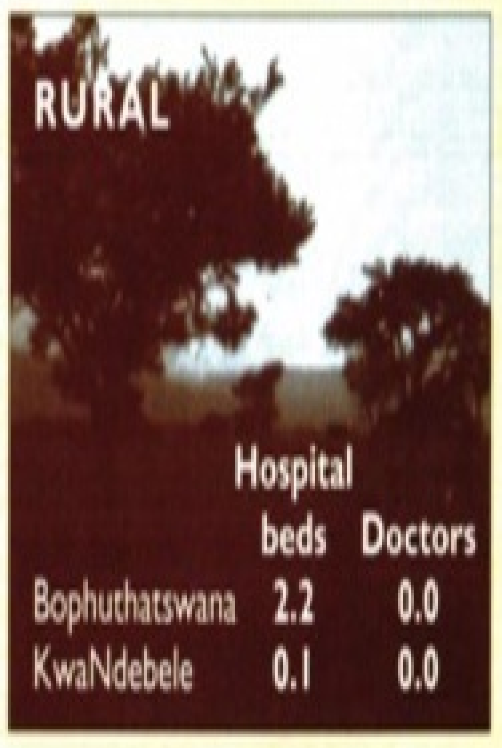
Health-care facilities, particularly in rural South Africa, are often non-existent.

HEALTH INDICATORS PER 1,000 POPULATION, 1989[6]



URBAN

	Hospital beds	Doctors
Western Cape	5.7	1.3
Gauteng	4.0	0.9



RURAL

	Hospital beds	Doctors
Bophuthatswana	2.2	0.0
KwaNdebele	0.1	0.0

SOUTH MEETS SOUTH

Many white South Africans do not like to think of their country as 'Third World' (or even 'African'). But South Africa has roughly the same income per head as Brazil, and statistics show its living conditions to be much worse – because poverty is deeper and more widespread in the African country.[3,5]

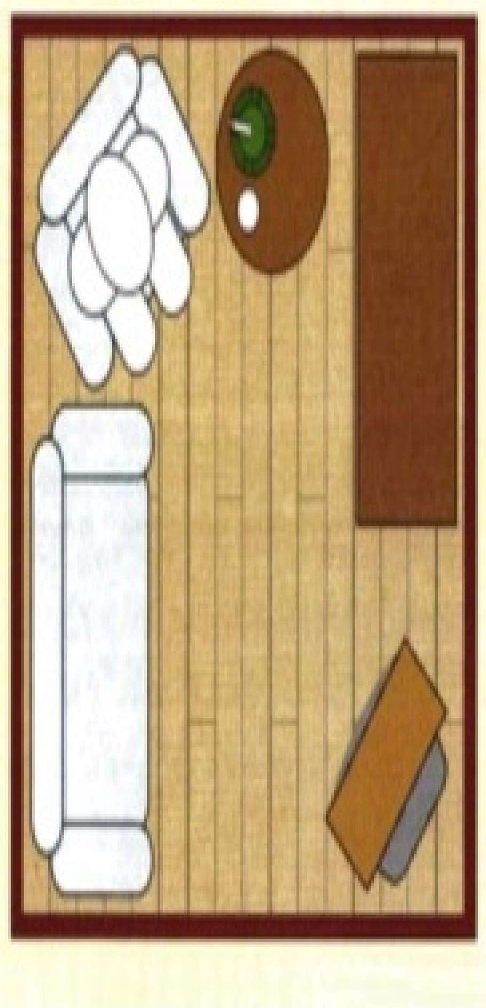
1992	BRAZIL	SOUTH AFRICA
GNP per capita	$2,680	$2,530
Life expectancy	66	62
Infant mortality (per 1,000 live births)	65	70
Maternal mortality (per 100,000 births)	150	550
Adult illiteracy %	19	35

THE BIG ISSUE

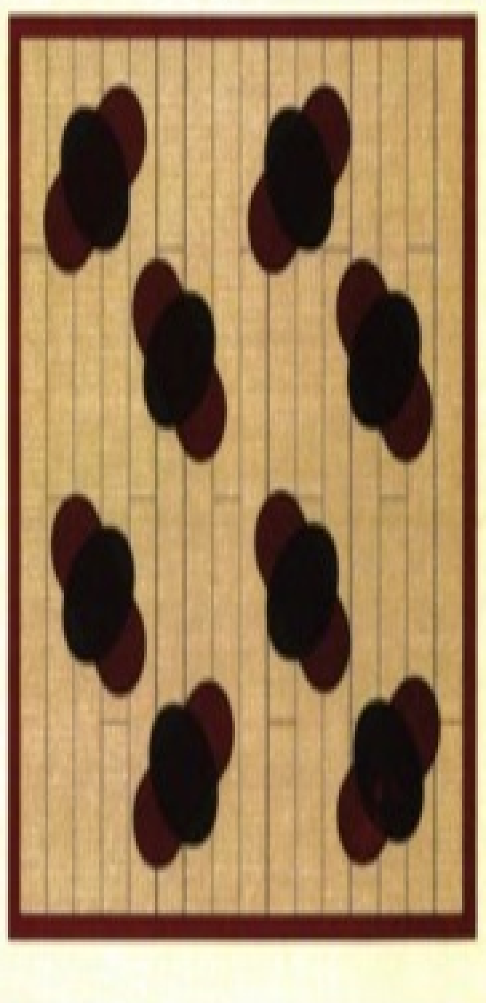
Housing conditions in South Africa are among the worst in the world. Just 58 per cent of homes are connected to a water supply and more than a quarter are not classified as 'permanent' structures. The disparity between white and black homes is enormous.

AVERAGE FLOOR AREA PER PERSON

Whites – 33 square metres each



Blacks – 4 square metres each



Children without childhoods

A lost generation of thugs and hooligans? Or anti-apartheid soldiers who have not received their due? **Nancy Scheper-Hughes** looks at the classroom warriors of the townships.

At a special showing in Cape Town of the once-banned anti-apartheid film *A Dry White Season* I was unprepared for the spontaneous audience reaction: boos and hisses accompanied scenes of the 1976 Soweto schoolchildren's uprising.

It was August 1993. I had just arrived to spend a year as a visiting academic in South Africa and was still suffering from a combination of jet lag and culture shock.

'Decent people are just sick and tired of violent schoolchildren on the rampage,' explained Pamela, my new colleague. She was the same person who, when driving us into Cape Town from the airport along the notorious N2 highway, warned us to be ready to duck for cover at any time. 'This is the part of the road where township "totsies" (young black thugs) stone "white" cars,' she said, flashing her brilliant, tense and biting smile. And no wonder, I thought, looking out on the ugly stretches of plastic, cardboard and corrugated-iron shacks behind razor-wire – fenced-in squatter camps that looked like bombed-out concentration camps, surpassing in sheer physical misery any Brazilian *favela* I had ever seen.

SOUTHLIGHT

Not just playing games: the children of apartheid at a funeral for ANC youth members.

But before the month was out I too had seen my fill of media images of local township schoolchildren burning textbooks, *toi-toying* to the chant 'one settler one bullet', overturning and 'torching' the cars of suspected government 'agents' who dared to enter black townships during an ANC-initiated black teachers' strike called 'Operation Barcelona'.

The strike took its name from the torches carried at the 1992 Olympic Games in Barcelona. In South African townships torches were also a symbol of liberty but they were used ominously to keep out 'settlers', burn out police collaborators and other 'bad eggs', some of whose shacks were torched and others of whose bodies were set on fire with 'necklaces' of petrol-filled tyres hung around their necks.

One of those 'bad eggs' was 15-year-old Ernest Mphahlele from Tembisa township near Johannesburg who made the mistake of running with the wrong crowd, one of several street gangs that terrorized the township. Ernest dressed smartly and, until some rival gangsters shot him in the calves and put him on crutches, he was a notorious run-around. So much so that when local teenage vigilantes came looking for Ernest his mother gave her son up for as good as dead.

Harsh codes

Dolly Mphahlele understood the harsh codes that governed township life and when the young dictators warned the woman that her son would be 'disciplined' she demurred, saying: 'The one thing I won't stand for is I don't want fire on my son. You can kill him, but do not burn him.'

Her maternal plea was ignored. The day after Dolly Mphahlele buried the charred remnants of Ernest his handsome, grinning face was on the front page of the Johannesburg *Sunday Times* under the headline: 'Horror Necklacing of a Teenage Boy'. Soon after that the story was carried in the *New York Times* and other US papers as well.

By this time I was carefully documenting the everyday violence of township life, especially for young people. What was extraordinary in this case was the personal recognition given to the 'senseless life and brutal death' of young Ernest Mphahlele. Most violent deaths in South African townships are recorded, if at all, as mere body counts. In news reports white deaths 'count' – they have names, personalities, grieving family members and so on. Black deaths are merely counted.

Nearby black townships turned into increasingly hostile 'no-go zones' for non-blacks of any political persuasion, *comrades* or not in the struggle. We learned our lesson when our car was angrily chased away by trash pickers at a muddy, littered entrance to New Crossroads squatter camp.

But when the American student Amy Biehl was dragged from her car in Guguletu township – she made the error of carrying her black comrades home – and brutally pummelled to death by politicized youths shouting 'Death to the Settler!', the circle closed. I began to internalize the horrible and sensationalist media image, the 'lost generation' of African youth: deranged, demented, destructive and demonized.

Murdered feelings

During the trial of three youths that followed, when eye-witnesses came forward to describe in horrible detail Amy's final agony, the youths packed into the upper gallery of the courtroom laughed and cheered. This story played in newspapers throughout the world. But something was missed in the reporting. Mzikhona ('Easy') Nofemela, one of the defendants, had whipped around to address the gallery: 'What's wrong with you?' he shouted. 'Get out of here! Go home, all of you!'

'The laughter was not acceptable to me, or to anyone else,' said Nona Gozo, the soft-spoken lawyer for the defence. 'But it did not shock me. I live in a township and I know the extent to which apartheid has murdered human feelings.'

'Who are the defendants; what can you tell me about them?' I asked.

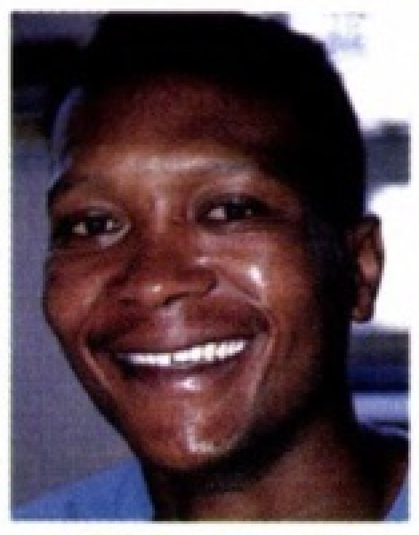
'In every sense they are children... In fact, lovely children, just like any other children. Under normal circumstances they would have had a wonderful, normal life. But they are children of apartheid.'

I knew what she meant. The little black children of Chris Hani squatter camp, where I had been working, played games like 'funeral' and 'AK-47'.

As for the three boys accused of killing Amy Biehl the history of apartheid is graphically inscribed in their bodies, their social skin. A doctor testified that he had personally examined 'Easy' Nofemela at the time of his confession. Each of the nine scars on his young body told a story of

FRAGMENTS OF THE DAWN

Ringside seat



Mpho Mathebula, a student at Vista University, Soweto, gets some critical verdicts on the new Government from his neighbours.

'Is it yet *Uhuru?*' sings the Bird of Africa, Miriam Makeba.

We have the long-awaited government of the people, by the people. But do we really feel free? I went to find out from a cross-section of grassroots opinion among the youth in my neighbourhood.

Bongani Makhathani is a young teacher. 'The new Government will deliver nothing to the oppressed majority,' he says. 'The diversity of political interests within it will render it a failure. ANC policy is to address bourgeois interests.'

Lethola Modise is the third-born in his family and is sceptical: 'Our leaders talk about change – and the more they talk, the more things stay the same.'

But his elder sister Tebogo is more hopeful: 'Even though history bears testimony to the failure of black leaders, the South African situation will be an exception. The youth should not lose hope, because good things come to those who wait.'

Mama Dolamo was born in Soweto but grew up in the rural areas. She is a garment worker, a member of the ANC Women's League and much more confident. 'I trust that the Government I voted for will deliver,' she says.

Buti Kgosinang is from Bophuthatswana. He came to Soweto in 1984 and works as a waiter. 'I earn peanuts because my work is not regarded as a profession. I'm not prepared to wait any longer: this is the time for all people who were oppressed to have a share of the big apple. The Government has the backing of the people, so why should it not succeed?'

Gweje Methula is the only member of a family of eight who managed to break through the education barrier and is now a postgraduate student. 'Rural areas are the point of departure for human development,' he says. 'Urban people should not forget about them – nothing can be properly balanced without them. In these areas the culture of participation and mass struggle is non-existent. The history of black leadership may be characterized by nepotism, but this cannot be permitted in South Africa. Black élites are inevitable: there have been no egalitarian societies in our times, not even in Cuba.'

And what do I think? No more than a year ago we were still engulfed by politically motivated violence. Now 'the winds of change' have finally blown through our country. But material conditions on the ground will only improve if people are genuinely empowered. The Government should not be given time just to relax and rest on its laurels. We must keep it on its toes, as if it were in a ring and we were at the ringside. ■

township life: stab wounds, brick bashings, chops to the head from a machete, burns, scars from untreated infections and poor medical care. A veritable topology of South African violence.

After an 11-month trial marked by disappearance of key witnesses, accusations of police torture and dancing on the courtroom steps by their young supporters, the three young men were convicted of killing Amy Biehl.

Since the elections last April reports continue to surface of a new spate of murder-necklacings in the black townships, used not as they had been in the past to discipline known police collaborators but to rid the most wretched squatter camps of suspected witches, thieves and other ne'er-do-wells.

Archetypal

It is widely believed in liberal academic circles and the 'progressive' white press that most township violence was perpetrated by 'gangs of youth' who once participated in political struggle but had become involved in violence for the sake of violence alone. We are left staring at a 'violence machine', fuelled by a primordial 'will to destroy'. The images are terrifying and archetypal: the play of shadows on the wall as witches-cum-collaborators are burned alive; the dark beasts braying at the city gates.

This perception was even shared by Nelson Mandela who in a speech in 1992 lamented the passing of the once-proud 'Young Lions' into an anarchistic and purposeless 'Lost Generation' of young thugs and hooligans. Mandela cautioned sadly: 'The youth in the townships have had over the decades a visible enemy – the Government. Now that enemy is no longer visible because of the political transformation that is taking place. Their enemy is now you and me – people who drive a car and have a house.'

But the ANC is partly to blame for this. The Young Lions were used by the ANC in campaigns that kept township youth out of school, in the streets and above all available to 'the struggle'. When the struggle was reaching its grand and concluding phase the youth were swept aside. Old enough to fight, the Young Lions were told they were too young to vote. Mandela's promise to lower the voting age to 14 was unfulfilled.

Robbed of schooling, manipulated by political slogans, ('revolution now, school later'), controlled by gangs, arrested and tortured by the police and pursued by local death squads, they are children without childhoods.

Among them I met a girl from Nyanga township who was arrested during police sweeps in the late 1980s, when political organizations were still banned. The child had innocently put on her older sister's T-shirt with its banned ANC logo. The police prodded her with electric shocks until she 'produced' names of 'comrades'. Terrified and knowing nothing, she made up some names and was released, only to be arrested several times more throughout the following months. Finally she was transformed into a police informant, in danger both at home and in prison so that, she said, the boundaries between jail and home were completely blurred.

Instrumental ends

When social analysts stress – as they do now – the expressive, performative quality of the 'new' forms of youthful violence, there is a refusal to see that violence, even violence with studied and horrendous cruelty, may serve instrumental ends in civil wars, guerrilla wars, wars of liberation, ethnic and religious wars. The death of Amy Biehl asks us to face what liberal, progressive, Enlightenment-oriented democrats find almost impossible to assimilate: the political nature of cruelty. The violent eruptions of township youth were no more expressive, irrational and chaotic than the everyday violence of the apartheid state against which the violence was mobilized.

Township youth was recruited by the thousands to serve as largely unheralded foot soldiers in a war of liberation that spanned decades and cost them their childhoods, their innocence, their health, their education – and therefore, ironically, their freedom. The death of Chris Hani, the hero of the Young Lions, turned the roar into Rachel's lament. But grief can be readily mobilized into murderous, even gleeful rage. It sometimes felt as if the soul of the country had been amputated and eaten by the 'monsters' of apartheid and now by apartheid's children.

Writing as I am now, after the elections, there is much to be hopeful for. In the necessary settling of accounts that lies ahead the wounded Young Lions deserve first dibbs. Their heroism needs to be recognized, their losses mourned and their bodies mended. Above all, their wandering souls need to be captured and firmly anchored in a new moral economy where the roar of the Young Lions is an assertion of life, not a cry of danger; where the *toi-toi* can be (like the *frevo* in Brazil) a leaping, ecstatic dance *against* death, rather than a prelude to or mournful celebration after death. ■

HENNER FRANKENFELD / SOUTHLIGHT

Healing wounds: Amy Biehl's sister builds bridges with the townships after the murder.

Nancy Scheper-Hughes is Professor of Anthropology at the University of California, Berkeley. During 1993-94 she was Professor and Chair of the Department of Social Anthropology, University of Cape Town, South Africa.

Bring back the **boycott!**

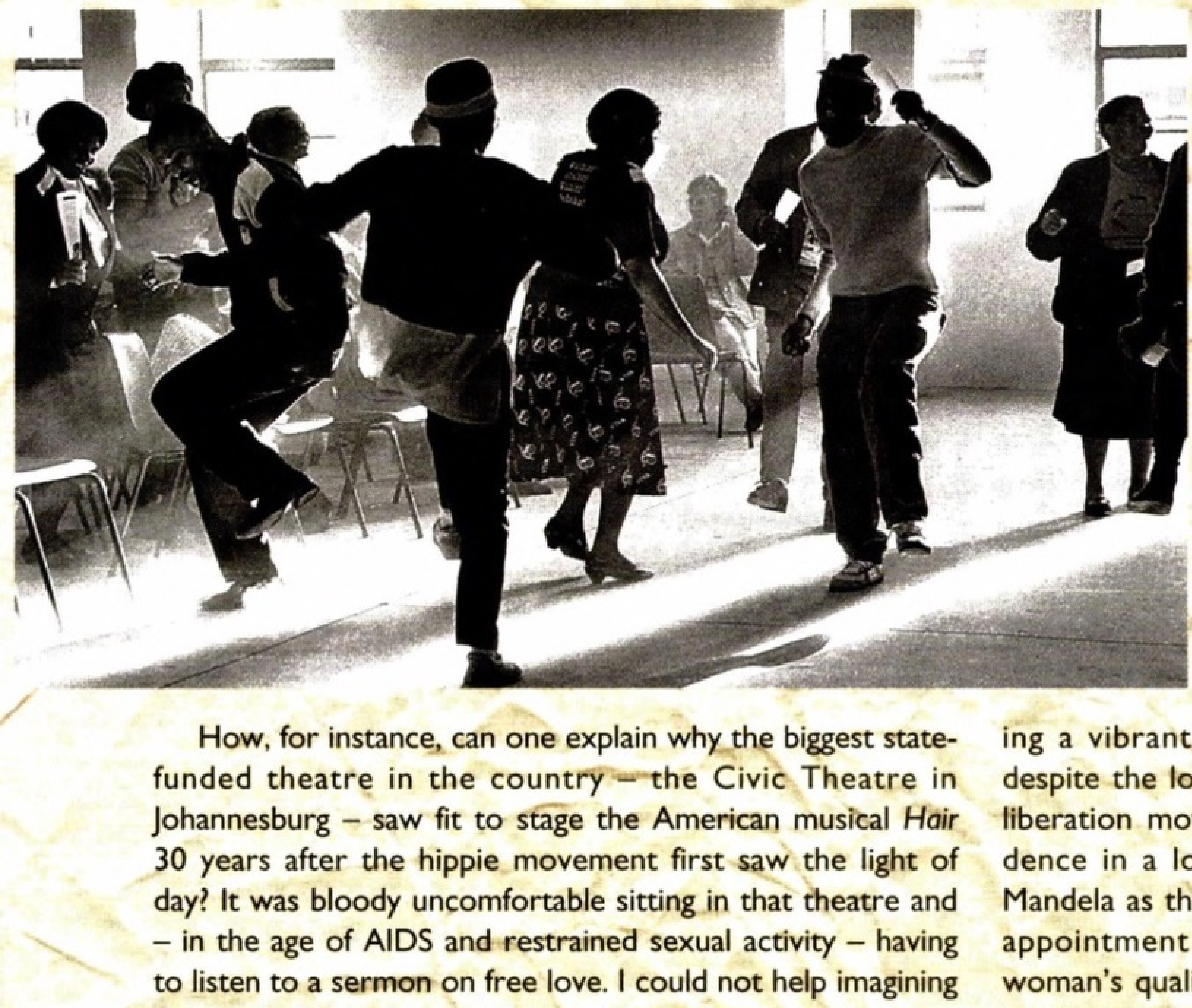
The price of admission to the global-village show is beyond a joke – and too high for *Bafana Khumalo*.

THE revolution is over. Damn, there is nothing to watch in the theatre.

In the mid-1980s, at the height of the struggle against the apartheid regime, there was an unprecedented degree of cultural activity. Talented people with scant resources would get on stage and blow you away, sending white liberals on a guilt trip just long enough for them to drive into the placid environs of whites-only suburbia.

Brilliant two-handers, like Mbongeni Ngema and Percy Mtwa's *Woza Albert*, peopled the makeshift stages of the townships and finally graduated to left-wing centres like the Market Theatre. Of course the stage was also populated by some pure get-on-the-stage-and-scream-at-the-regime garbage. Perhaps that was inevitable.

Then the struggle wound to an abrupt, unannounced end. And what happened to our cultural scene? Well, we went back to the comfortable bad habits of the past and imported ideas from abroad, regardless of how embarrassingly out-of-place the shows were.


MAGGIE MURRAY / FORMAT

How, for instance, can one explain why the biggest state-funded theatre in the country – the Civic Theatre in Johannesburg – saw fit to stage the American musical *Hair* 30 years after the hippie movement first saw the light of day? It was bloody uncomfortable sitting in that theatre and – in the age of AIDS and restrained sexual activity – having to listen to a sermon on free love. I could not help imagining that park where young hippies always seemed to hang out being littered with used condoms – a disgusting thought.

Towards the end of last year the Market Theatre staged two tributes. One was to a dead American singer, Janis Joplin, and the other to a living-dead American performer who from time to time drew temporary life from foreign cultures to resuscitate his career – Paul Simon.

That may be the way to make sure we South Africans are not too separated from the proverbial global village. But there's a problem. We seem to be forgetting all those lofty sentiments of the struggle past, of creating a true South African culture that tells our own stories – how we fall in love, how we fall out of love, how we laugh and cry, how we can be a people in pain and pleasure.

TV used to be populated by syndicated American situation comedies and soap operas. Now, with the lifting of the Equity ban on the sale of British cultural products to South Africa, there has been a sad deluge of ancient English comedies titillating the English sector of our society – mostly third- or fourth-generation white South Africans who still call England home and drink tea and eat scones in the afternoons.

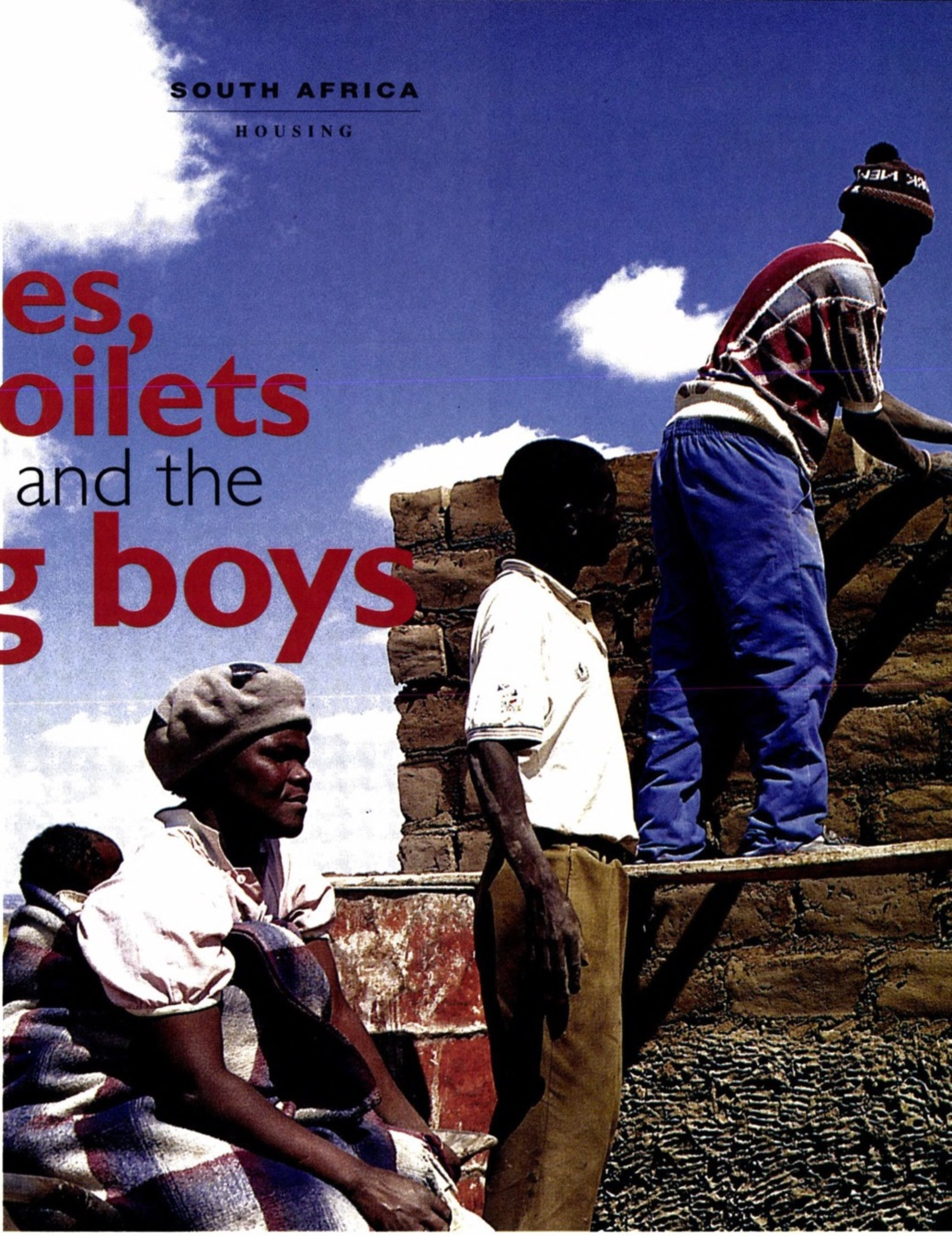
Within the past year we have seen *The Two Ronnies* taking the prime-time slot on one of our state-owned channels. 'Bring back the cultural boycott!' some people were heard to cry. I was among them. We are now in the racist clutch of another ancient British TV show, *Mind Your Language*. Set in a school for immigrants to Britain, it reveals how dumb the rest of the world is and how cultured and reasonable are the British. The show, 20 years behind the times in its racial nature, should be canned. But I don't suppose that will happen. Our acceptance into the global village seems to be dependent on our buying this kind of dated crap.

So, at the beginning of our new democratic state, is there any hope of our creating a vibrant, local culture? There seems to be none, despite the lofty promises of the ANC when it was still a liberation movement. What was their first vote of confidence in a local culture? Well, they appointed Winnie Mandela as the Deputy Minister for Arts and Culture. The appointment has nothing to do, in my view, with the woman's qualification in matters cultural. It was a decision by the powers-that-be to put her in a place where she would be least likely to cause trouble. There goes any hope for a cultural revival. ■

***Bafana Khumalo** is a freelance journalist and a columnist for the* Weekly Mail and Guardian *in Johannesburg.*

Palaces, toilets and the big boys

The new Government has promised to provide one million new homes within five years. **Alan Morris** assesses its chances of hitting the target.



HENNER FRANKENFIELD / SOUTHLIGHT

Do-it-yourself building from the grassroots makes slow progress – half the homes in South Africa have no water.

At a recent Residents' Association meeting in an historically white, middle-class locality in Johannesburg widespread fear was voiced about going away on holiday. Residents were worried that when they came back they would find their homes occupied by 'squatters'. Their anxiety was based on reports that a few empty homes in wealthy suburbia had been occupied by squatters. They had also been aroused by recent invasions of land and empty apartment blocks in the Johannesburg inner city.

In the same week as the Residents' Association meeting, Nelson Mandela launched his autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* at one of the most palatial homes in South Africa, that of insurance magnate Douw Steyn. The house is so large and opulent that some of the guests were heard to inquire whether it really was somebody's private home.

Housing inequality is the most concrete illustration of the legacy of apartheid. One of its most shocking bequests is the shortage of adequate housing stock in the country. Whereas most white South Africans live in adequately serviced and comfortable housing, the majority of black South Africans – especially that section of the population that in the days of apartheid was classified 'African' – lives in overcrowded dwellings that often lack basic services.

Planact, a non-governmental organization that focuses on urban issues, estimates that countrywide about 13 million people do not have proper homes. The late Joe Slovo, as Minister of Housing, said in Parliament that in 1993 there was a total housing backlog of 1,448,476 houses. In 1990 it was estimated that 60 per cent of the 1.8 million African people resident in the Durban area lived in shacks, and in Gauteng (the new name for the area that includes Johannesburg and Pretoria) half of the African population, some 2.6 million people, resided in backyard or free-standing shacks.

In the countryside of the former 'homelands' vast areas have become giant squatter communities devoid of the most basic services. A good example is Winterveld, a settlement of about 250,000 people 30 kilometres north of Pretoria. Recent surveys indicate that in this area only four per cent of the population have access to a formal water supply and 0.01 per cent to formal sanitation. Access to electricity is minimal. Trash removal hardly exists and the build-up of refuse in some sections is so bad that, according to one report, 'access to properties can hardly be found'.

A central commitment of the new Government is to ensure that over the next decade all of South Africa's population is adequately housed with access to decent services. This is an enormous task. From the late 1960s it was government policy to restrict the building of housing for Africans in the metropolitan areas. In addition the new Government has to contend with a situation where 5.7 million – 70 per cent – of South African households earn less than 1,500 rand ($375) a month and thus do not have the financial means to acquire a home of their own.

At one point Tokyo Sexwale, the Premier of Gauteng Province, endeavoured to go it alone and implement a housing policy drawn up by a major construction company. Unsurprisingly this placed the resolution of the crisis in the hands of large construction companies. Sexwale claimed that the plan would ensure that about 250,000 houses were built in the Gauteng region annually. The unilateral unveiling of the plan and its unattainable expectations created a good deal of acrimony between Slovo and Sexwale, who eventually withdrew the plan.

Slovo felt that the Government could not leave the delivery of housing solely to the large construction companies. 'There is clearly a significant role for big developers,' he said, 'both in terms of building houses and in terms of imparting construction skills to emerging black entrepreneurs in all of this. But I think we just recognize that the cause of social transformation in South Africa will not be served if we leave it up to the big boys, who simply drop housing on communities at 1,000 rand ($250) a square metre.'

When they were elected there was much talk by the ANC of delivering one million fully serviced, brick-and-mortar homes over a five-year period. The figure has been retained but quality targets are now far more modest. The proposal now is to deliver 'starter homes' rather than fully completed units. A starter home to the value of 15,000 rand ($3,750) will consist of core foundations, maybe one room and basic services. The rest will have to be completed when the occupant can afford it.

'A serviced site plus a large toilet... I do not believe this is what we fought for.'

Even some ANC MPs are not happy with this. Limpho Hani, wife of the late Chris Hani, said in Parliament that she was worried that the poorest sector of the population would end up 'with a serviced site plus a large toilet and I do not believe this is what we fought for'.

Despite such criticism the Government is likely to stick to its policy. So far progress has been slow, although resources have now been allocated to various provincial authorities for the development of 90,000 sites.

Delivery is also threatened by a rent-and-service boycott which has gripped many of the African urban centres over the last decade. The Government has stated that unless the boycott of payments is resolved it will be impossible to attain the goals of the new housing policy. To break the back of the boycott, says the Government, it will only embark on housing projects in those areas where residents are paying for services.

In return for mortgage guarantees from the Government, financial institutions have agreed to resume lending to low-income households. Because of the limited funds available for housing, the Ministry is pinning its hopes on the private sector to provide much of the capital required. In an agreement signed recently the banks pledged to provide 50,000 loans a year to low-income groups, equivalent to two billion rand ($500 million).

The hinging of housing finance on breaking the service boycott is the weakest link in the Government's housing policy. According to the Deputy Minister of Provincial and Constitutional Affairs, Mohammed Valli Moosa, payment for services slumped in 1994 from 33 per cent in January to just 19 per cent in July. An official in control of a massive new site-and-service development called Doornkop, alongside Soweto, said only one per cent of residents is paying the 45 rand ($11) flat-rate charge.

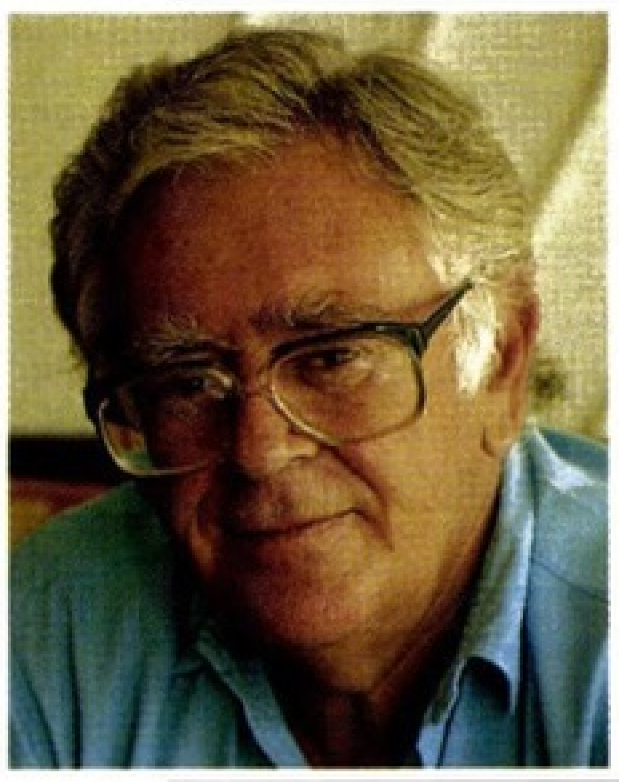
At a housing summit in the impoverished township of Botshebelo in the Orange Free State, Joe Slovo got all the major players to agree to a new housing accord. The accord calls for – indeed is premised on – an end to non-payment. Whether the delegates will be able to convince their constituents that payment is now the way forward is far less certain. The culture of non-payment appears to have become an indelible feature of the South African urban landscape.

Future support for the ANC partly depends on its ability to make an impact on the massive imbalances wrought by apartheid. Housing provides one of the key challenges. The death of Joe Slovo in January is a setback. But if substantial progress can be made here, despite all the difficulties, then the ANC as an organization and the country at large will have taken a big step forward. ■

Alan Morris teaches at Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg.

Joe Slovo

'Life is a terminal illness,' Joe Slovo told reporters who questioned his ferocious appetite for work despite his evident sickness. He remained at the centre of events in South Africa, as chairperson of the South African Communist Party and Minister of Housing, right up until his death on 6 January 1995 at the age of 68. He described the period since the elections last April as the happiest in his life. 'What more could one person expect out of life? I could happily lay down and die now,' he said.



He arrived in South Africa in 1934. His father had fled from anti-Semitic pogroms in Lithuania. He joined the South African Communist Party at the age of 16 and at 18 served as a radio operator in Egypt during the Second World War. On his return to South Africa he studied law at Witwatersrand University, Johannesburg, where he got to know Nelson Mandela and, with others, formed the military wing of the ANC, Umkhonto we Sizwe ('MK').

He was visiting the ANC leader, Oliver Tambo, in Tanzania when Nelson Mandela and others in the MK leadership were arrested and began their long imprisonment. He lived in exile, first in London and then, after the 1976 Soweto uprisings, in Angola. In 1982 his first wife, Ruth First, was killed by a letter bomb sent by South African agents to Mozambique, where she was teaching.

Joe Slovo was a key figure in the protracted negotiations between the ANC and President de Klerk which resulted in the formation of a transitional 'Government of National Unity' after elections in April 1994. The close friendship between Slovo and Nelson Mandela cemented the alliance between the Communist Party and the ANC. At the ANC's Conference in December 1994 he was awarded its highest honour, the Isithwalandwe/Seaparankoe.

'You cannot build an economy or a society purely on the basis of entitlement,' he said in one of his last interviews. 'People have to make a contribution.' Of his commitment to the Soviet Union he said: 'I was wrong and I am ashamed of some of the traps I was led into.' But he was critical of what he called the 'vilification' of Lenin.

'The wretched of the earth make up over 90 per cent of humanity,' he said in his last report to the Communist Party of South Africa. 'They live either in capitalist or capitalist-orientated societies. For them, if socialism is not the answer there is no answer at all.'

David Ransom

SIMPLY – THE RO

There's a long road from liberation to freedom in South Africa: from the overthrow of apartheid to the end of poverty and injustice. The building bricks are on order, in the Government's Reconstruction and

☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆ **Excellent**

☆ ☆ **Poor**

IDEALS

Problem – A state dedicated to promoting apartheid, in a world dominated by free-market economics, has somehow to be turned around to serve the majority. The Government has a democratic mandate but is required to leave the armed forces, civil service and big business intact.

Promise – The RDP, with its own Cabinet Minister (Jay Naidoo), will promote economic development through 'reconstruction' – a concerted assault on poverty, on race and gender discrimination. All the 'promises' listed here come from the RDP.

Progress – Between its first idealistic draft and its current third draft, the RDP itself has shifted towards conventional 'trickledown' economics – waiting upon 'export-led' economic growth to deliver benefits to the poor. The Programme is in danger of becoming detached from the central thrust of government policy and instead using only aid money. But its principles still enjoy widespread support.

NI rating: ☆ ☆ ☆

EMPLOYMENT

Problem – Apartheid laws denied workers any basic rights. There are high levels of unemployment and the mining industry makes extensive use of migrant labour. Only a quarter as many women as men hold jobs in the formal sector of the economy.

Promise – Creation of 300,000 to 500,000 non-agricultural jobs every year within five years.

Progress – Conventional economic policies leave employment levels at the mercy of a prolonged recession and job losses. 'Affirmative action' to give blacks access to the large public sector is hampered by failures in education and guarantees of job security to existing employees. Rumoured privatization plans are unlikely to help.

NI rating: ☆ ☆

LAND

Problem – Apartheid pushed millions of black South Africans into overcrowded and impoverished reserves, homelands and townships. Large-scale agriculture led to the eviction of rural workers from their land and homes. The 60,000 white farmers own over 87 per cent of the land and account for more than 90 per cent of its product.

Promise – The redistribution of 30 per cent of agricultural land within five years.

Progress – Restoration of land to those with titles dating back before the Land Act of 1913 is not problematic and is proceeding – but this covers only a very small amount of land. Most of the seizures took place after that date. Only Government-owned land is likely be transferred to the dispossessed in any quantity and most large landowners will survive unscathed. The target already looks ambitious.

NI rating: ☆ ☆ ☆

1997
1996
1995
1994

AD TO FREEDOM

Development Programme (RDP). But are they now being put in place? As the anniversary of the April 1994 elections approaches and the South African people begin to look for practical results, the **NI** assesses the progress so far.

☆ ☆ ☆ **Good** ☆ ☆ ☆ **Fair**
☆ **Appalling**

ILLUSTRATION BY KAREN DONNELLY

HOUSING

Problem – The urban housing backlog in 1990 was conservatively estimated at 1.3 million homes, to which 200,000 households were being added each year. Just 50,000 houses were built in 1992. There is widespread and increasing non-payment of rents.

Promise – A minimum of one million low-cost houses to be built over five years, intended for low-income households, including rural areas.

Progress – Joe Slovo, the Housing Minister, was widely respected as the most dynamic and effective Cabinet minister before his death in January 1995. He has been replaced by Sankie Nkondo: she was previously Deputy Minister for Welfare. So far much of the effort has gone into devising mechanisms to finance the programme, which still does not meet the needs of the lowest-income groups. Confrontation with non-payers and squatters has been threatened. Compromises on housing quality – 'site and services' only – have already been made. But there is general confidence that results will be visible shortly.

NI rating: ☆ ☆ ☆ ☆

EDUCATION

Problem – The curriculum carries the mark of racism, sexism, authoritarianism and outmoded teaching practices.

Promise – A compulsory 10 years of education is to be phased in. No class is to exceed 40 by the end of the decade. All schools are to be connected to the electricity grid.

Progress – A disaster. Teachers are hostile. All impetus has been lost in a bureaucratic mess – partly because local government will not be firmly established on a democratic basis until elections later this year. There has been no agreement and little progress on any of the key objectives, despite mitigating circumstances. Drastic surgery is required.

NI rating: ☆

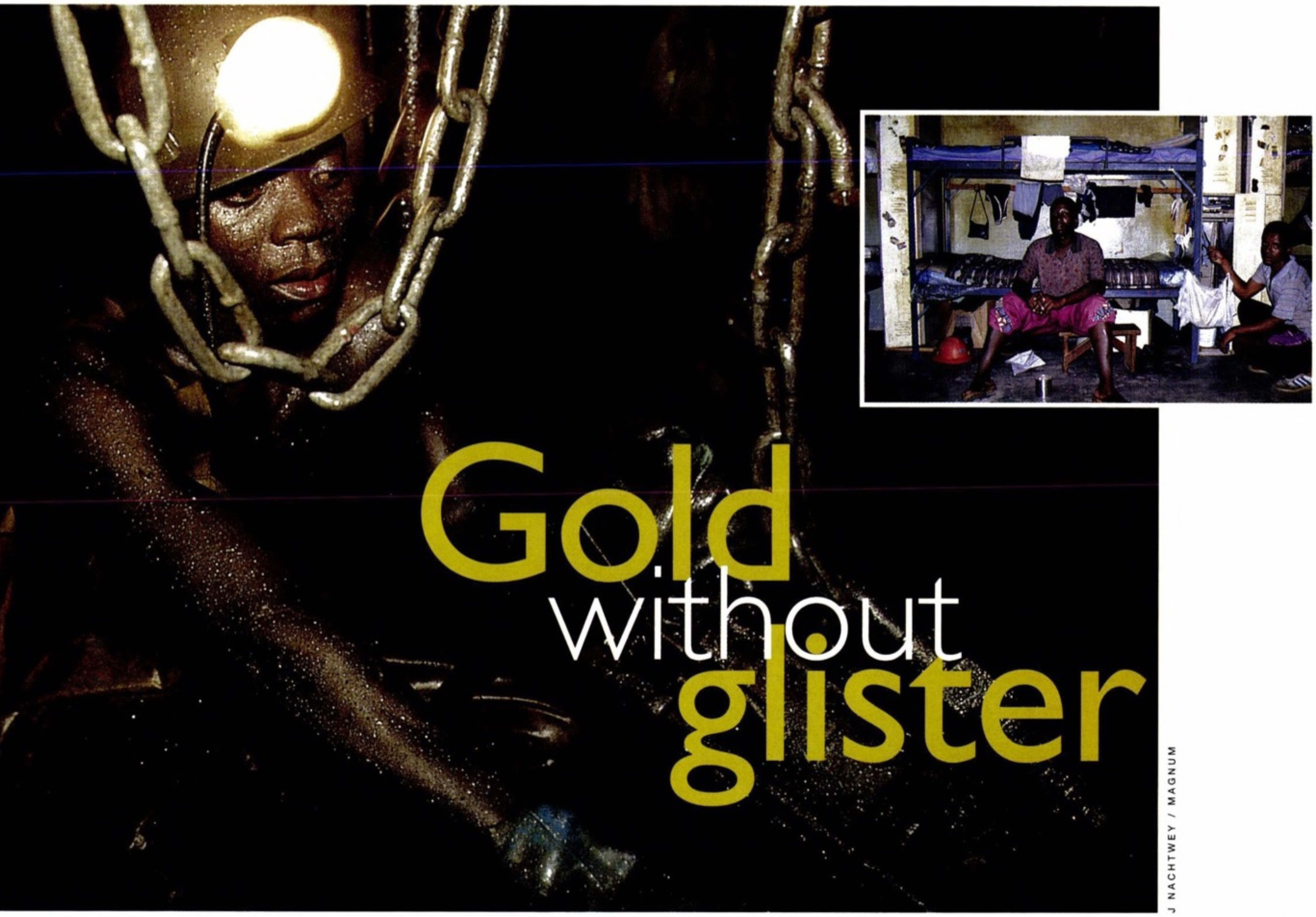
HEALTH

Problem – South Africa spends $160 dollars per head per year on health – nearly 10 times what is needed to provide basic public health services and essential clinical care for all – yet millions go without services or care of any kind. The situation in rural areas is particularly bad.

Promise – One model or pilot health district in each province. Primary health care training for 25 per cent of district health personnel by 1995, 50 per cent by the end of 1997.

Progress – The 'Presidential Project' to give immediate free health care to all infants and their mothers, though urgently needed, has threatened to overwhelm existing services and distracted attention from longer-term goals. There are no clear plans yet on the future structure of health care or its financing.

NI rating: ☆ ☆ ☆



Gold without glister

DAVID RANSOM

J NACHTWEY / MAGNUM

Imprisoned: in the heat underground, and (inset) in 'hostel' camps.

The pursuit of an unnaturally heavy, completely useless metal drives the South African economy and blights the lives of the migrant labourers who mine it. **David Ransom** goes underground to unearth the hard facts of a dirty business.

'In a fairground you'd pay good money for this,' grins Judith, my companion from the National Union of Mineworkers. As the cage falls away beneath the soles of my boots I reflect that I'd be willing to pay very much better money not to have to do this at all. Ice – tipped into chutes at the side of the mineshaft by what is claimed to be the largest refrigerator in the world – shrieks after us, spraying us with mist.

Three kilometres underground the stale air smells of earth. We clamber through tunnels that grow smaller, darker, more suited to rabbits, until we reach a white man who sits with his back against the tunnel wall, his legs across its floor, smoking a cigarette.

We have reached what remains of the stope – the 'Reef' of grey rock that is pursued into the bowels of the earth beneath Johannesburg by crazed mining companies. From it still flows the wealth that drives, in one way or another, the lives of virtually every South African. Gold provides 70 per cent of mining employment and 80 per cent of total mining exports, which in turn provide 80 per cent of South Africa's export trade.[1]

We are at the bottom of one of the deepest mines in the world, where the Reef is just 90 centimetres wide. It falls sharply away to the right, rises to the left. We enter as if into the jaws of a giant vice, propped open by bits of wood. We scramble, lying at an angle, towards the stope face itself.

The ice-cooled ventilation no longer operates effectively and the temperature rockets. I am blinded by perspiration. My heart races, my lungs labour, my muscles seize, my brain vibrates inside my skull with the piercing thud of pneumatic drills hidden somewhere in the darkness. I am utterly terrified. I think of the distance to the surface and feel an overwhelming urge to flee. I have been here just a couple of minutes. Thousands of people work – and sometimes die – here, eight hours a day, six days a week, a year at a time, for years on end.

In this very place, not much more than a year ago, a white 'miner' pulled a gun on a black 'mineworker' who tried to get into the same cage for the long haul up to the surface, and shot him dead. The letters 'AWB', denoting the far-right racist organization, are scrawled on a wall and left untouched.

Back on the surface a caged walkway runs for a kilometre or so through woods and across fields from the top of the mine-shaft to what is referred to as a 'hostel' but looks more like a concentration camp. Confined within barbed wire, corrugated-iron roofs and long, grey walls that also serve as the back of their homes, some 5,000 men live 20, 30 even 50 to a cell, around a succession of paved yards. At the centre of one such yard is the 'canteen' with its stench of foul food; in another the 'showers', dozens of nozzles hung above a concrete pit; in a third the 'bar', a barricaded warehouse dispensing the beer cans that litter the concrete.

I have been smuggled in here by Gabriel, the full-time shaft steward of the National Union of Mineworkers. Gabriel speaks with great assurance and thoughtfulness, prefacing his remarks with 'at the end of the day'.

Soft human hum

In the Union office – it took years of agitation and strikes in this mine to gain recognition for the Union just a couple of years ago – I speak to Patricia, who dispenses basic medical advice. I ask her what is the most pressing complaint she has to deal with. 'AIDS,' she says without hesitation. There is no evidence whatever of even the most basic forms of education or preventive care.

For a few hours I walk with Gabriel through the soft human hum of the 'hostel', which in places resembles a giant wardrobe of clothing and boots hung out to air.

'If your heart is not satisfied,' says John, sitting at a bare metal table in the middle of his cell, 'you are not happy. At least if you are paid enough money you can enjoy life. Most of the people who came here with me in 1982 saw that they were wasting their time and went home. But I have problems and there are no other jobs. Otherwise I would have left the mine a long time ago.'

John is not untypical. He earns $160 a month at the stope face – those who work on the surface earn perhaps half that. He comes from the 'homeland' of Bophuthatswana. Like all the 'mineworkers' here, some 60 per cent of whom are from Mozambique, he is an unskilled labourer, virtually without education, who leaves his home, wife and children for a year at a time to work out his next contract. There are in South Africa some 600,000 mineworkers like him.

The extreme conditions in the mine, the 'hostel' prison, the paltry pay and the migrant-labour system combine, I think, to create a dreadful form of human anguish more commonly imposed as a punishment. To survive it one must somehow adapt, but to remain human one must also object.

Clipped responses

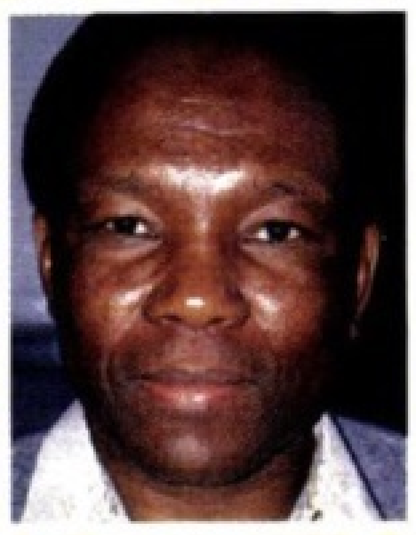
The previous day I had been entertained for lunch by the mine management at their private golf club. I asked them whether, in their opinion, they would ever employ a well-paid workforce. 'No,' came the clipped response. Why not recruit local labour? 'We tried it and it didn't work. They wouldn't stay.' Accidents and injuries? 'Ninety per cent human error. They don't do what they are told.' Thus are the lives of the 600 people who are killed and the 6,000 seriously injured in the mines of South Africa every year so casually dismissed. A black worker who spends 20 years underground faces a one-in-thirty chance of being killed and a one-in-two chance of being permanently disabled.[2]

Now, I know something about the mining industry and I know that the deep-vein techniques employed in this country are extremely risky and expensive. There is, I suspect, nowhere else in the world where such an industry could have existed at all, let alone prospered. It has done so because a ruthless system of migrant labour, bolstered by the apartheid state, has produced the cheapest workforce conceivable short of actively seeking to exterminate its members.

Two-thirds of South African gold reserves have now been extracted, and as the mines get deeper they become more 'marginal', yet more reliant on cheap labour. Even if the price of gold averages around its current $350 per ounce, production is set to fall from 614 tonnes in 1992 to 414 tonnes by 2007; at $300 per ounce it

FRAGMENTS OF THE DAWN

Saving the soul of the ANC



Big business showering 'comrades' with gifts; ministers and bureaucrats of the apartheid regime offering service with a smile: strange new conditions for the National Union of Mineworkers (NUM) to deal with. *Kgalema Motlanthe*, who has succeeded ANC leader Cyril Ramaphosa as the Union's General Secretary, talks to the NI .

The NUM represents predominantly those workers who are classified as 'unskilled'. That came about in our own, special, South African way, because blacks were excluded from registered trade unions by a law which was only repealed in 1979.

We now have to address the disabilities that came with the exclusion of our members from all training opportunities. Sometimes, when you talk about the way apartheid operated, it's as if you were talking fiction. The Mineworkers Act specifically said that black workers, regardless of their aptitude, could not qualify with a Blasting Certificate – the crucial qualification was reserved for whites.

Well, change has a funny way of impacting on people's thinking. Because the mining industry has been the backbone and catalyst of industrial development in South Africa, it has always been a very powerful lobby with the Government. The employers' organization, the Chamber of Mines, is now doing its damnedest, confronted with the new situation, to change thinking in its favour – even inside the ANC.

But Pik Botha [Foreign Minister of the apartheid regime and now Minister of Mines] is also concerned about his own future and we find he is amenable. In fact we find that all the old bureaucrats, who were in the past very belligerent, are now amenable to suggestions. They have to protect themselves by opening up to those who represent tomorrow. I think Pik Botha feels he must at least try to be seen as a progressive because the conservative elements who want to preserve the past are an endangered species.

We think 'reconstruction' is about changing the mindset of everyone. We have been recipients of assistance from all over the world because we have been regarded as victims of apartheid. We are now in a position not only to do things for ourselves – we must assist others as well. We suggest that on one national holiday, say 16 June, all working people should go to work and all the proceeds should go towards funding Reconstruction and Development Programme projects. We think that would help change the mindset. The projects could be, say, in the area of housing – and with decent housing we could do away with the migrant labour system altogether.

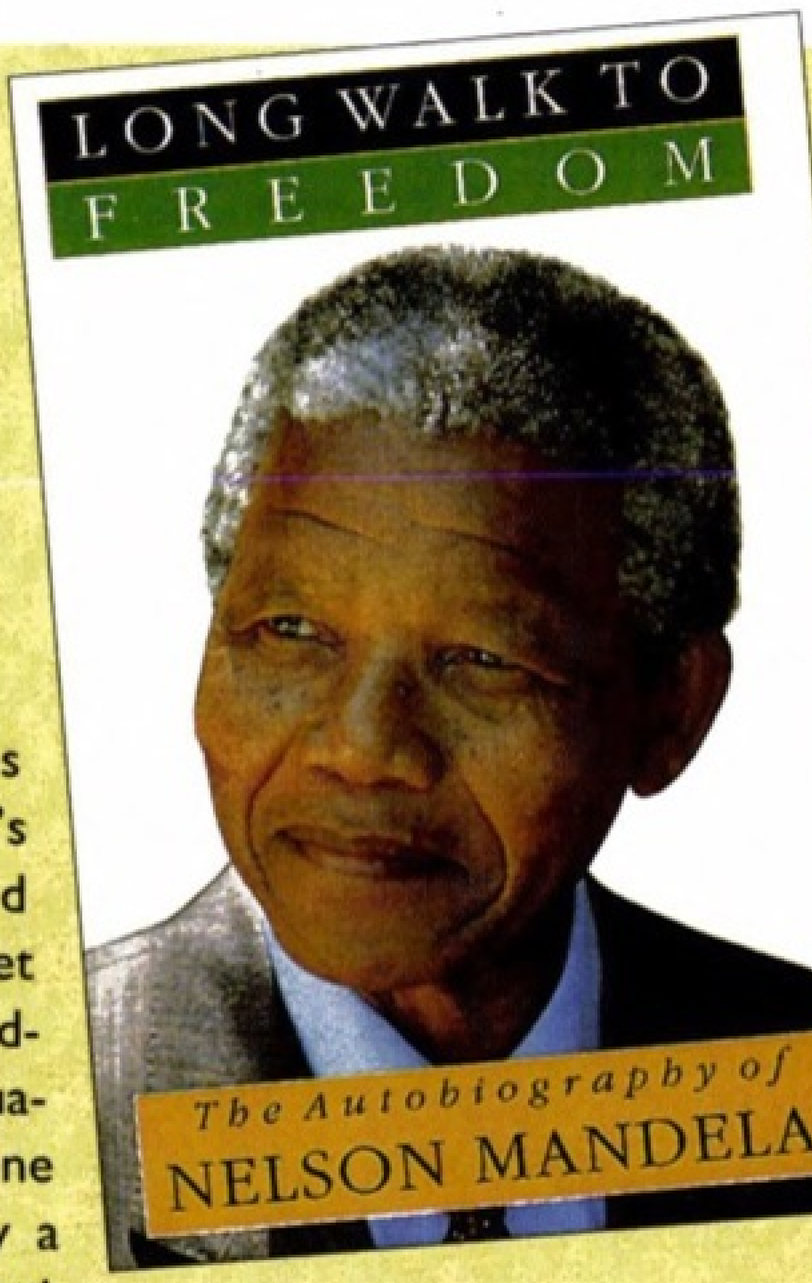
Apartheid served as a unifying point. You could rally the broadest cross-section of the population around the anti-apartheid programme. Now that apartheid has gone there's going to be a realignment.

The political responsibility of the labour movement, as I see it, is really to defend that character and bias in the ANC that was in favour of the downtrodden. We're going to have to wage a major struggle to save the ANC's soul in that regard. They do not keep us informed of what they are doing.

In fact the threat to the ANC now is not the National Party. It is big business. Big business will shower those comrades who are now in parliament or government with all sorts of gifts. That's the first line of attack. The trick is whether those comrades will have the ability to deal with it. ■

ALSO WORTH READING ON...

South Africa



The speed of events means that most of South Africa's great writers, poets and commentators have not yet had time to produce considered work on the new situation. There is, however, one new book that's already a best-seller and really is worth reading. It is, of course, Nelson Mandela's autobiography *Long Walk to Freedom* (Little, Brown and Company, London 1994).

The book is not without its snags. It is long, weighs a lot and is quite expensive – although Mandela has promised a paperback version soon. Sometimes you can detect the presence of a ghost-writer. Its elevated, patrician viewpoint occasionally turns monotonous. Because Mandela is such a consummate politician – he has an extraordinary ability to personify his political project – you can also find yourself wondering whether you aren't being served a careful interpretation rather than a straightforward account of his life.

But it is not dishonest. He tells you, for example, that although as a young man he worked in the gold mines of Johannesburg, his connections among the African leadership meant that his work was largely clerical and privileged. He acknowledges continuity with, and indebtedness to, his forerunners in the long struggle.

You can read the book as a wonderful story with an unlikely, happy ending that you already know. Or you can use it to gain some insight into the history and dignity of black South Africa. Above all, you can read it for the transparent wisdom of a great man.

ACTION

Many voluntary organizations in South Africa are in crisis, and some even face extinction, because funds are drying up or being redirected towards the Reconstruction and Development Programme. The situation is made more difficult because of the loss of key personnel who have been recruited into Parliament or the Government of National Unity. Everyone agrees, however, that independent voluntary organizations have a crucial role to play in a 'new' South Africa – now is the time when support is most urgently needed and can have the most positive effect.

Aotearoa/New Zealand
African Information Centre, (postal) PO Box 12 331, Wellington; (street) 6th Floor, Rossmore House, 123 Molesworth Street, Wellington.
Tel: (4) 473 4055. Fax: (4) 472 6374.

Australia
Campaign Against Racial Exploitation, PO Box 159, Mt Lawley, Western Australia, 6050. Works against international and local racism. Contact for support groups in other states.

Britain
ACTSA (Action on Southern Africa – successor organization to the Anti-Apartheid Movement), 13 Mandela Street, London NW1 0DW.
Tel: (171) 387 7966. Fax: (171) 388 0173.

Canada
TCLSAC/South Africa Report, 603 1/2 Parliament Street, Toronto, Ontario, M4X 1P9.
Tel: (416) 967 5562. e-mail: tclsac@web.

South Africa
Institute for a Democratic Alternative for South Africa (IDASA), PO Box 575, 7700 Rondebosch.
Tel: (21) 698 8389. Fax: (21) 689 3261.

United States
American Committee on Africa/ Africa Fund, 17 John Street, 12th Floor, New York, NY 10038.
Tel: (212) 962 1210. Fax: (212) 964 8570.

would fall to just 250 tonnes, less than half present levels.[1]

For the time being there is optimism on all sides that something, some kind of miraculous economic 'diversification', will eventually turn up to replace gold. It is true that the half-dozen huge companies which run the gold industry – Anglo American, General Mining-Union Corporation (Gencor) and Consolidated Goldfields prime among them – also run almost everything else in South Africa. But gold mining is what they know – indeed, it is really all South Africa knows about industrial development and trade in a 'global' economy – and these companies are just as likely to look elsewhere for their gold as to promote employment in new industries in South Africa.

I give Gabriel a lift back to his home township, south-east of Johannesburg. On the way we pass Dawn Park where the young, inspirational ANC leader Chris Hani was murdered just a couple of years ago. At the township the crude road is diverted beneath a modern highway to which there is no connection. Signposts disappear, replaced here and there by armed police searching for weapons. At a crossroads jammed with 'combi' mini-bus taxis Gabriel leaps out of the car. 'Turn right, drive like hell,' he says, 'and don't stop'. He phones to check I've arrived safely. It is, as Gabriel would say, the end of the day. ■

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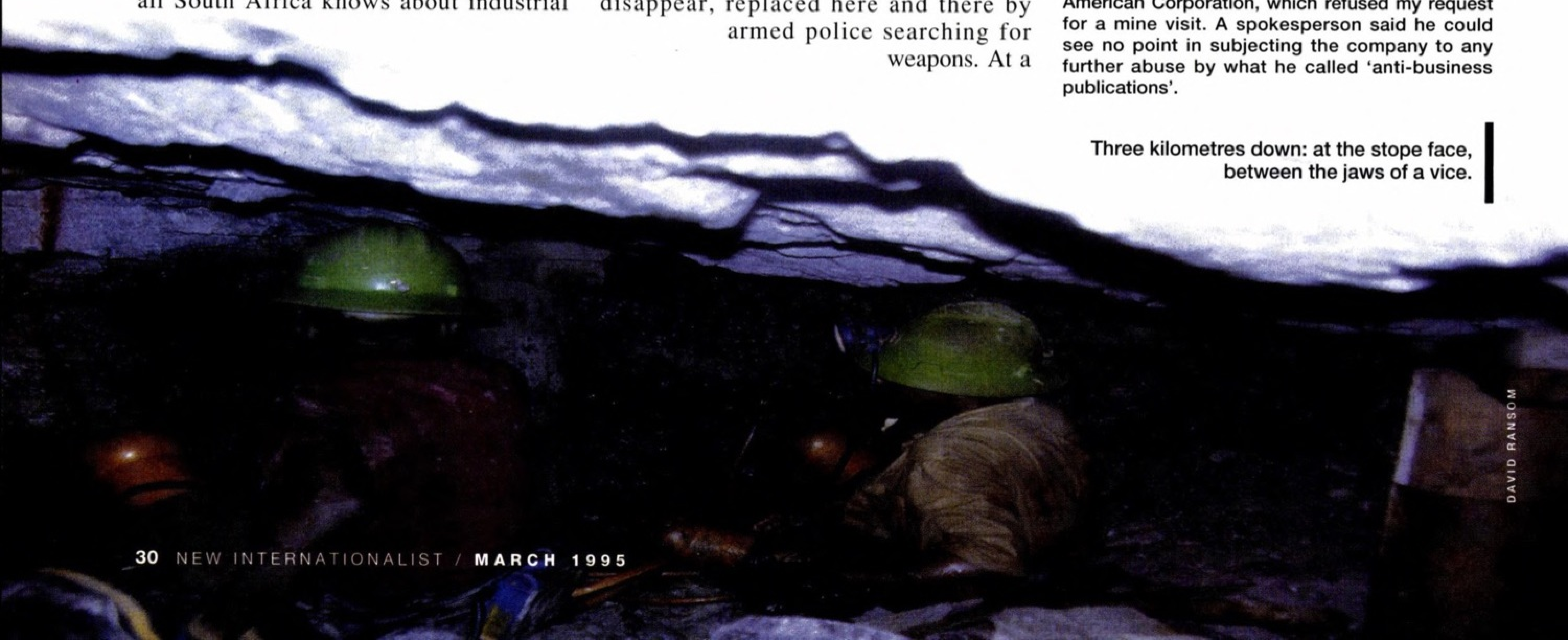
[1] *Making Democracy Work*, Macro-Economic Research Group, Cape Town, 1993. [2] *The Challenge of Mining Health and Safety*, Fleur Plimner, monograph report to NUM, June 1994.

I have not identified the mine in order to reduce any potential risk to individual NUM members who work there. But it was not run by the Anglo American Corporation, which refused my request for a mine visit. A spokesperson said he could see no point in subjecting the company to any further abuse by what he called 'anti-business publications'.



Three kilometres down: at the stope face, between the jaws of a vice.

DAVID RANSOM

The NI Interview with

Khalida Messaoudi

Richard Swift talks with a leading feminist who faces the daily danger of assassination in the midst of Algeria's brutal civil war.

'*Ce n'est pas entre, c'est contre.*' ('It's not between, it's against.') My rusty French has failed me and Khalida Messaoudi leans forward to make sure I don't miss a crucial distinction. Khalida, 36, is a former mathematics teacher and she is accustomed to being both precise and logical.

The social conflict currently raging in Algeria is a war, she stresses, but not in the way that most people think. 'This is not a fight *between* the military-backed Front de Libération National (FLN) Government and Islamic fundamentalists. It is more like a war *against* an unarmed civilian population by a group intent on imposing its narrow vision on all Algerians.'

More than 80 people a day are being killed by Islamic fundamentalists,' Khalida continues. They concentrate on journalists, she says, because writers symbolize freedom of expression, which the fundamentalists find intolerable. 'Intellectuals, teachers, writers, thinkers – these are the people killed because it is they who defend traditional notions of liberty. But sometimes simple citizens are killed too, randomly, just for the purpose of terror. One day ordinary people may decide to say "No" to the fundamentalists' ambitions and they want to avoid that happening. They kill women who oppose their views of how we should behave. They cannot allow difference. That is why they insist on veils to cover the difference. They are fascists who claim Allah is on their side and that they are marching under the banner of righteousness.'

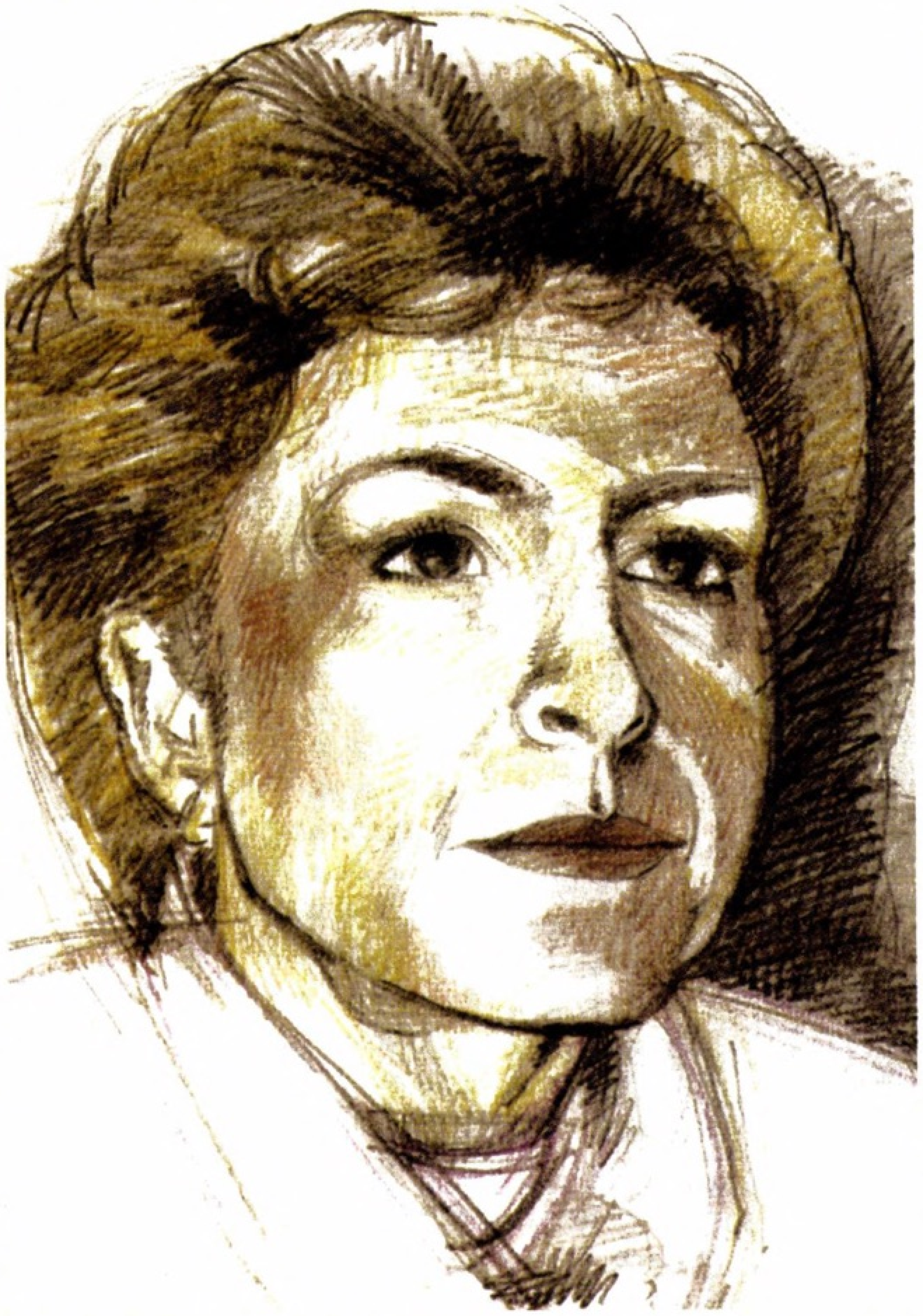


ILLUSTRATION: ALAN HUGHES

As a founding member of the 'Independent Association for the Triumph of Women's Rights', Ms Messaoudi is one of Algeria's most outspoken and best-known feminists. She has also been an unstinting critic of the fundamentalist Front for Islamic Salvation (FIS) and was a key organizer in a series of 1992 demonstrations against the establishment of an Islamic state. She got her start as an activist in 1981 when she helped spearhead opposition to Algeria's restrictive Family Code. Her passionate, determined intensity and a razor-sharp mind make her a formidable foe. And as a feminist she is critical of both the Government, whom she refers to simply as 'the power', and the Islamic fundamentalists, whom she calls the 'integrationists'.

According to Messaoudi they are simply two sides of the same coin. 'People in the West do not understand,' she says with barely-hidden frustration. 'The Islamic movement is not an opposition to the Government; it is in fact the best way for the one-party state to reconstitute itself. This is not to say that the fundamentalists don't have a popular base. After years of one-party rule people are desperate and many feel the FIS will make a difference. But when you examine their programme, there is nothing new. They just want to be the new dictatorship. If necessary they will compromise and absorb members of the FLN Government into their ranks. But it will simply be the old one-party state with a new face.

For Messaoudi the proof of this is obvious in the pattern of daily assassinations in the streets of Algiers and Oran. 'The FIS know very well where the leaders of the current regime live; they know their houses; they know everything about them but they will never kill any of them. They kill only democrats, intellectuals and liberals who have no direct political power. In some ways the FIS are doing more to save the regime than to destroy it.'

But if the Government were willing to cut a deal with the fundamentalists, why had it overturned the election which the FIS won in 1992 and seized power? To those outside Algeria, she explains, the reason may not be obvious, but insiders know that there is a power struggle within the Algerian Army itself. A republican faction which is absolutely opposed to the FIS is challenging an old guard who are willing to make a deal in order to save themselves from the inevitable. The old guard is now in control. This faction engineered the murder of President Boudiaf, the leader installed by the republicans after the coup.

The upshot? The risk of war between these two factions of the Army is now a real possibility, she says – propelling Algeria even closer to the abyss.

Khalida Messaoudi's outspokenness has not come without a price. She now spends each day in her homeland trying to avoid the assassin's bullet.

'How do I live?' She smiles impatiently at the question. 'It's not a question of how I live but of how I survive. When you are condemned to death your first objective is to stay alive… not only physically but as a symbol. You must be constantly on the move with no fixed points – no house, no regular work. I have developed the habit of not having any habits.' ■

Reviews

books

Land of Exile – Contemporary Korean Fiction

translated and edited by **Marshall R Pihl, Bruce** and **Ju-Chan Fulton**
(Sharpe ISBN 1-56324-195-1)

Peace Under Heaven

by **Chae Man-Sik**, translated by **Chun Kyung-Ja** *(Sharpe ISBN 1-56324-172-2)*

UP TO 1945 KOREAN writers were banned from using their own language by Japanese colonial rulers. They have certainly made up for it since, if **Land of Exile** is anything to go by. It's a collection of 12 carefully crafted short stories, written in Korean by authors of the so-called 'Liberation Generation'. Most of the stories – written between 1948 and 1984 – are here translated into English for the first time.

They provide telling and moving insights into life in a country that has seen more change and turmoil in one century than most experience in a millennium. The legacies of colonial rule, a bloody civil war followed by partition, political repression and galloping modernization have pushed, pulled and dragged ordinary Koreans through a series of dizzying transformations. The result: an overpowering feeling of exile, of alienation which is explored by each of these 12 writers in their own distinctive way. The collection combines poignant social realism with a more internal, at times almost surreal, exploration of feelings and relationships.

Land of Exile
CONTEMPORARY KOREAN FICTION

Translated and edited by
Marshall R.Pihl · Bruce & Ju-Chan Fulton

Even in the most everyday domestic tales, Korea's turbulent and traumatic past suddenly pops up in the form of personal memories or general feelings of loss and confusion. *A Shared Journey*, by Im Ch'oru, describes a meeting between two young men who had shared student years together. But the friends have become estranged since one has had to go into hiding, wanted for subversion by the military government. The other has remained free, eyes wide open, mouth shut, and deeply sad. Their reunion is uneasy – both emotionally and morally – and punctuated by a characteristically tragic event which triggers the shared memory of a past massacre in their hometown. What emerges from the story is a kind of courage in facing reality. It's there also in the story by Pak Wanso, one of the two women writers featured. *A Winter Outing* follows the few hours during which a city woman, suddenly realizing that her marriage of many years is a cold and empty sham, goes out into the even colder countryside where she comes to a full realization of her despair. Then, quite unexpectedly, warmth and some sort of meaning come into her life in the shape of an inn-keeper and her mother-in-law, as they open up emotionally to tell her a story from their past. It may be that this is the message of Korea's writers to Koreans: face the trauma and pain of the past. It can't be buried in the headlong rush to modernization.

There is some beautifully detailed and sensitive writing in this collection – and some lightness too. In *The Man Who Was Left as Nine Pairs of Shoes*, writer Yun Heungghil manages to treat the plight of urban squatters with a gentle, even-handed humour.

A sense of humour is the hallmark of one of Korea's most famous writers, Chae Man-Sik. His classic **Peace Under Heaven** is also now available in English for the first time. It's a vigorous black comedy, simultaneously funny and appalling, which has as its protagonist Old Master Yun, a rich, greedy, larger-than-life egotist. Chae Man-Sik is refreshingly prepared to aim his barbed wit not only at the Japanese colonial rulers but at greedy, profiteering Koreans too.

Both these translations will help this exciting body of literature to take its rightful place on the world stage.

Politics ☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

music

Kalfou Danjere

by **Boukman Eksperyans**
(Mango 162-539 927-2 CD)

WHEN HAITI'S MILITARY junta got wind of the fact that Boukman Eksperyans were planning to a do a rendition of **Kalfou Danjere** (Dangerous Crossroads) as their entry for the 1992 Port au Prince Carnival, they did what any despot might do: they banned it. It's easy to see why. The song – all 10 glorious minutes of it – spirals upwards in its interlocking rhythms and urgent calls and responses. Nine voices warn against killing, cheating, lying. Ancestral spirits and voodoo gods are passing through and their wrath is to be feared. This is a compelling musical sermon and its wild beauty is enough to make anyone's hair stand on end.

Boukman Eksperyans: banned but unbowed.

This is dangerous music for a dangerous country and the Creole-speaking Boukman Eksperyans are, for all their rhythmical flows and sweet voices, a serious bunch. Their first album, *Nwei Inosan,* was banned. Censorship was the least of their problems in making this second album. Armed threats and government surveillance forced several members of the group underground. The 'experience' that their name refers to is that of an eighteenth-century slave uprising against the Spanish which was initiated by a voodoo priest called Boukman. Boukman was caught and executed, but not before his name had become a byword for freedom amongst the transplanted African slaves. In Duvalier's last days, the crowds were singing the words of another Eksperyans' song *Ke M Pa Sote* (You Don't Scare Me).

Although **Kalfou Danjere's** 13 songs address the political and social contexts of modern Haiti, the album's reach is far wider. Its most striking feature has to do with voodoo, the religion which still enjoys a wide popularity amongst Haiti's poor. Boukman Eksperyans present voodoo as a cultural entity which gives an important spiritual dimension to their music. Dissent and spirituality are expressed in other ways. Theodore Daniel and Mimerose Beaubrun, the band's chief songwriters, explore links with Jamaican reggae, invoking the rasta as a figure representing independence and spirituality.

Boukman Eksperyans offer an intoxicating sound. Their ra-ra rhythms – salsa and soca inflected with more traditional figures – are capable of filling dance-floors. Indeed this is perhaps a measure of their music's power. Rooted in a continuity between the past and the present, **Kalfou Danjere** provides the possibility of an extraordinary way forward.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

film

The Silences of the Palace

directed by **Moufida Tlatli**

MOUFIDA TLATLI makes her bold debut as a director with this powerful elegy, which examines the place of women in Tunisian society in the years leading up to and just after the struggle for independence in the 1950s. Set mostly in the royal family's ornamental palace, **The Silences of the Palace** focuses on Alia, a young girl who has lived all her life there with her servant mother. This is a time when kings and princes could still exercise their 'rights of the bedchamber' and avail themselves of any of the female servants of the court. But as Alia grows up she discovers that she is gifted with a sweet singing voice which will potentially free her from this destiny. The film unfolds through a series of flashbacks as an adult Alia returns to her childhood home. The lavish palace is now an empty, echoing husk, haunted by its difficult past which Alia must now re-examine.

In a meticulous fashion, Tlatli documents the daily routines of the women servants. But amongst the women there is a sense of solidarity and resistance. Their laughter and singing in the warm kitchen – *their* domain – proves unsettling to those who seek to control them. The first part of the film is devoted to this enclosed life. But gradually the world outside the palace walls begins to creep in. Snatches of radio broadcasts and finally the arrival of a young revolutionary teacher in need of shelter point to the political upheavals as Tunisia struggles for independence from the French. But this film is very much about 'the colonized of the colonized'. There is another revolution needed for the women to be truly free – and Tlatli does not offer any easy resolution.

Politics ☆☆☆☆
Entertainment ☆☆☆☆

The Chomsky Reader

...being the book that introduces the West's most persistent activist, anarchist and intellectual gadfly.

Noam Chomsky is a troublemaker. He is an irritant in the body politic. He is persistent, meticulous and diligent. His decades-long mission to put on the public record the misdeeds of the US and its client countries is nothing short of heroic. An anarchist, standing outside all affiliations and parties, he carries on the tradition of the famous 'muckraker' IF Stone, struggling to combat untruth and to disseminate information.

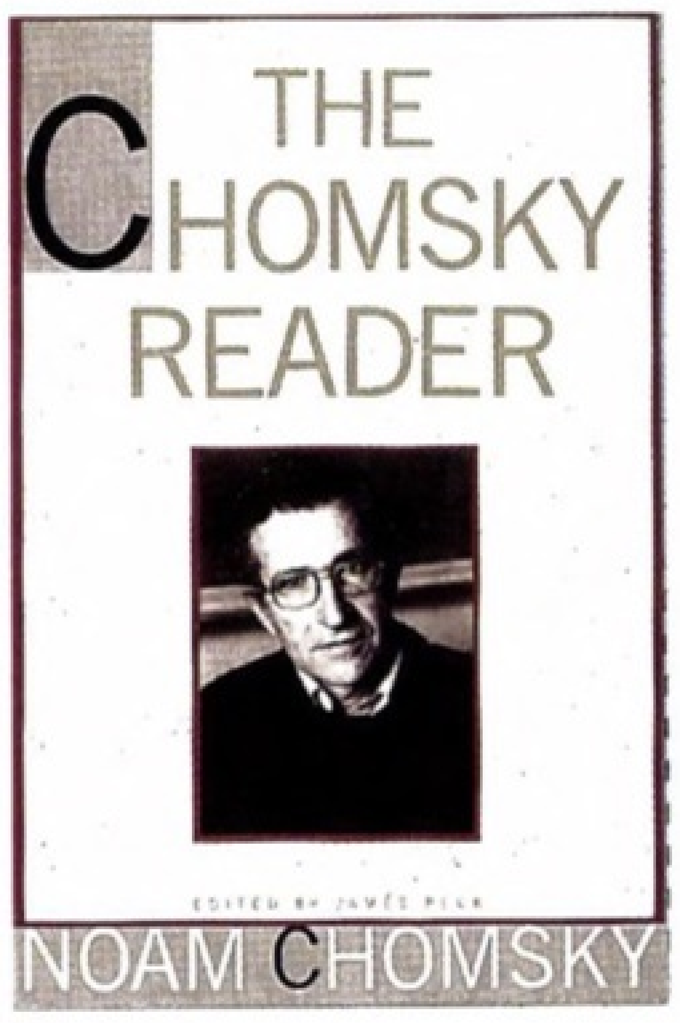
Chomsky, who is a linguistics professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, is a dissident voice of the rampant capitalist world. He does not subscribe to the doctrine that the behaviour of the United States is essentially benign if occasionally bumbling. Chomsky's view is so at odds with the image that most US citizens have of themselves that he has some explaining to do. In his writing he has set out, in stark clarity, what he believes to be the imperatives of US foreign and domestic policy: the need to secure untrammelled access to raw materials in order to maintain the existing disposition of world wealth. Brute force in support of selfishness, to put it crudely.

It has long been one of Noam Chomsky's central tenets that parameters of knowledge and information are fixed so that the acceptable limits of debate are controlled. Consent is 'manufactured' and opinion massaged through control and manipulation of the media. Intellectuals, the 'cultural élite', are essential to this process. They internalize and disseminate the ideological message and patrol the borders of acceptable argument. Chomsky's genius is in refusing to accept such boundaries and attempting to enlarge the discussion beyond the ditches dug by authorities. For example, concerning the war in Vietnam, he says – truthfully – that the US *invaded* South Vietnam. Such a statement causes a double-take – surely the US was protecting South Vietnam from aggression? Chomsky patiently disentangles the rhetoric and disinformation from the actual occurrences, pointing out that invading states always claim to be disinterested liberators and that we have no difficulty recognizing aggression when not obscured by the cloud of obfuscation – as with the Soviet invasion of Afghanistan or Saddam Hussein's invasion of Kuwait. The control of information is the control of opinion is the control of society.

For more than 30 years Chomsky has been harrying the purveyors of official history. He produces at least one book a year as well as numerous essays, pamphlets and magazine articles. Increasingly his polemical books are knitting together, each becoming a square in a patchwork of a continuing critique of global iniquity. Despite the daunting subjects and a weighty but necessary freight of footnotes and references, he is always crystal clear, never academically convoluted.

In 1988 Serpent's Tail and Pantheon brought out **The Chomsky Reader**. This sets extracts from his writings on Vietnam and Cambodia, Latin America and the Middle East beside his best-known essays on ideology, scholarship and freedom. The work is given a context by the inclusion of a long interview with Chomsky in which he – uniquely – talks about his own life and the events which have shaped his remarkable world view.

Chomsky is not a purely negative commentator nor is he disillusioned – this would presume that he had at one time been 'illusioned'. He proceeds from the presumption that there is a self-interested logic in the way nations and their leaders act, especially those who protest most loudly that they are a special case, that they are uniquely philanthropic.



Never in his writing does he resort to rhetorical flourishes or sentimentality. Cool rationality flecked with occasional black irony is his unwavering style. Such clear-headed sobriety may not be the stuff of stirring barricade speeches but it has the authenticity of a tested truth; not always uplifting but ultimately liberating. 'There are no magic answers,' he says, 'no miraculous methods to overcome the problems we face, just the familiar ones: honest search for understanding, education, organization, action that raises the costs of state violence for its perpetrators or that lays the basis for institutional change – and the kind of commitment that will persist despite the temptations of disillusionment, despite many failures and only limited successes, inspired by the hope of a brighter future.'

We have other – alas too few – writers and thinkers who are prepared in the pursuit of truth to naysay the wrath of authority; Christopher Hitchens in the US and John Pilger in Britain spring to mind. But Chomsky stands alone in the rigour and intricacy of his examination of the workings of power. When he was invited in 1971 by Cambridge University to deliver the inaugural Bertrand Russell Memorial lectures, Chomsky praised Russell as a fellow thinker and activist, in words which apply equally to his own accomplishments, as 'among those few who have shown, in this century, the splendour that human life can achieve in individual creativeness and the struggle for liberty'. ■

Peter Whittaker

The Chomsky Reader *by* ***Noam Chomsky****, edited by James Peck (Pantheon Books US, Serpent's Tail UK).*

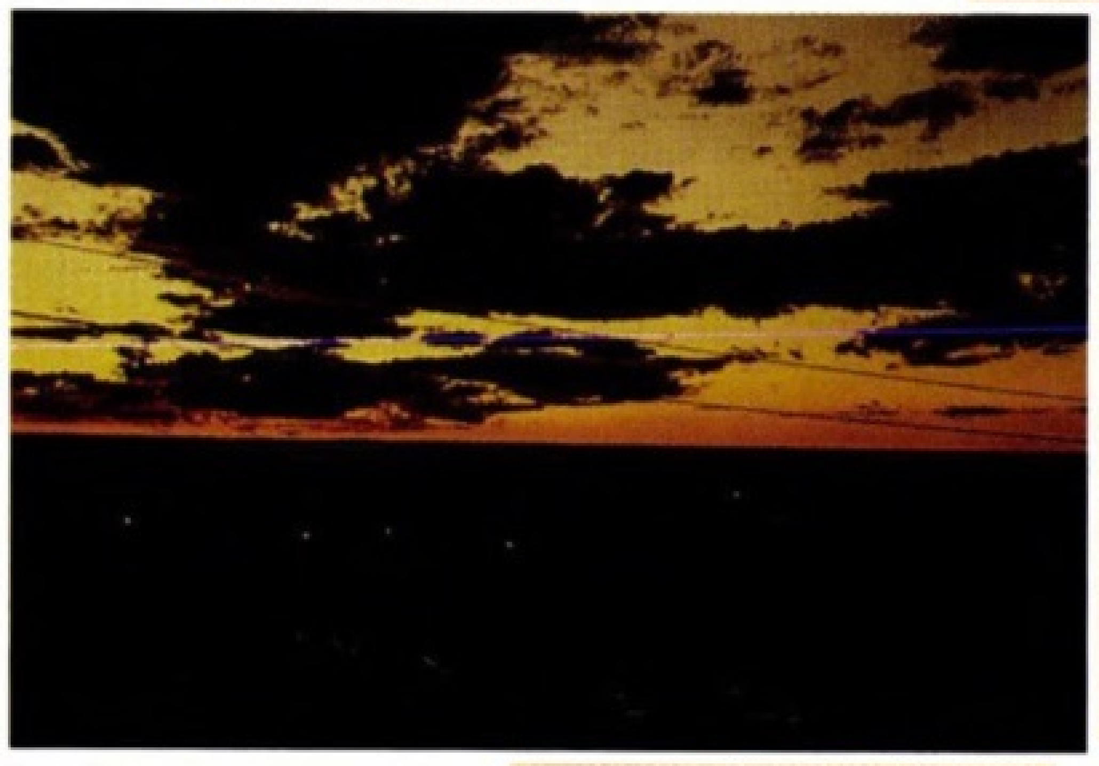
Curiosities

QUESTIONS THAT HAVE ALWAYS INTRIGUED YOU ABOUT THE WORLD WILL APPEAR IN THIS, YOUR SECTION, AND BE ANSWERED BY OTHER READERS. PLEASE ADDRESS YOUR ANSWERS AND QUESTIONS TO 'CURIOSITIES'.

Where does the Eastern hemisphere begin and the Western hemisphere end? Is it just a variation of the First-Third World division? Where do Mexico and Turkey fit in?

● There is no vertical equivalent of the equator but 0 degrees longitude runs through the London suburb of Greenwich and the international dateline which is both 180 degrees west and 180 degrees east on the opposite side of our planet form the nearest equivalent. This means that the Americas are in the Western hemisphere and Asia, Australasia, and most of Europe and Africa are in the Eastern hemisphere. None of which makes much sense if you live in Hawaii, and go east to reach California and west to reach Japan. But then British and Dutch cartographers dominated mapmaking for many centuries.

JP Lethbridge
Birmingham, England



Stirring skies keep the heavy high.

DAVID RANSOM

How come gases which are normally considered heavier than air – such as chlorine, carbon monoxide and carbon dioxide – are reaching the upper layers of our atmosphere?

● Even gases that are heavier than air – which doesn't include carbon monoxide, by the way – settle very slowly in the atmosphere. This is because they are constantly being bombarded by other gas molecules which move in a random way and help to force them upwards. This phenomenon also prevents fine dust from settling quickly. Just watch the dust in a shaft of sunlight – and dust is very much heavier than gas molecules.

Because the gases settle so slowly they can be transported through the troposphere – the first 12 kilometres of the atmosphere – on air currents caused by variations in temperature and pressure. Gases which only react slowly and which remain in the atmosphere for months or longer are generally well mixed in the troposphere. These gases include carbon dioxide, methane and CFCs.

Very long-lived gases such as CFCs, which can survive in the atmosphere for a few hundred years, are slowly transported into the next layer of the atmosphere.

As well as being transported to the higher layers of the atmosphere, gas may be formed there in reactions driven by sunlight. For example, ozone is formed naturally in the stratosphere by the action of sunlight on oxygen, and about half of the carbon monoxide in the troposphere is formed from methane and other hydrocarbons and oxygen in the sunlight.

Janet Moxley
Edinburgh, Scotland

● Brownian movement – the random micro-movement of all molecules not locked in solids – adds to the stirring of the atmosphere. Also, some compounds have an affinity for each other. Alcohol and water, for example, have a loose molecular bonding which is why the lighter alcohol in your beer does not sit on top of the water.

Len Clarke
Uxbridge, England

AWAITING YOUR ANSWERS

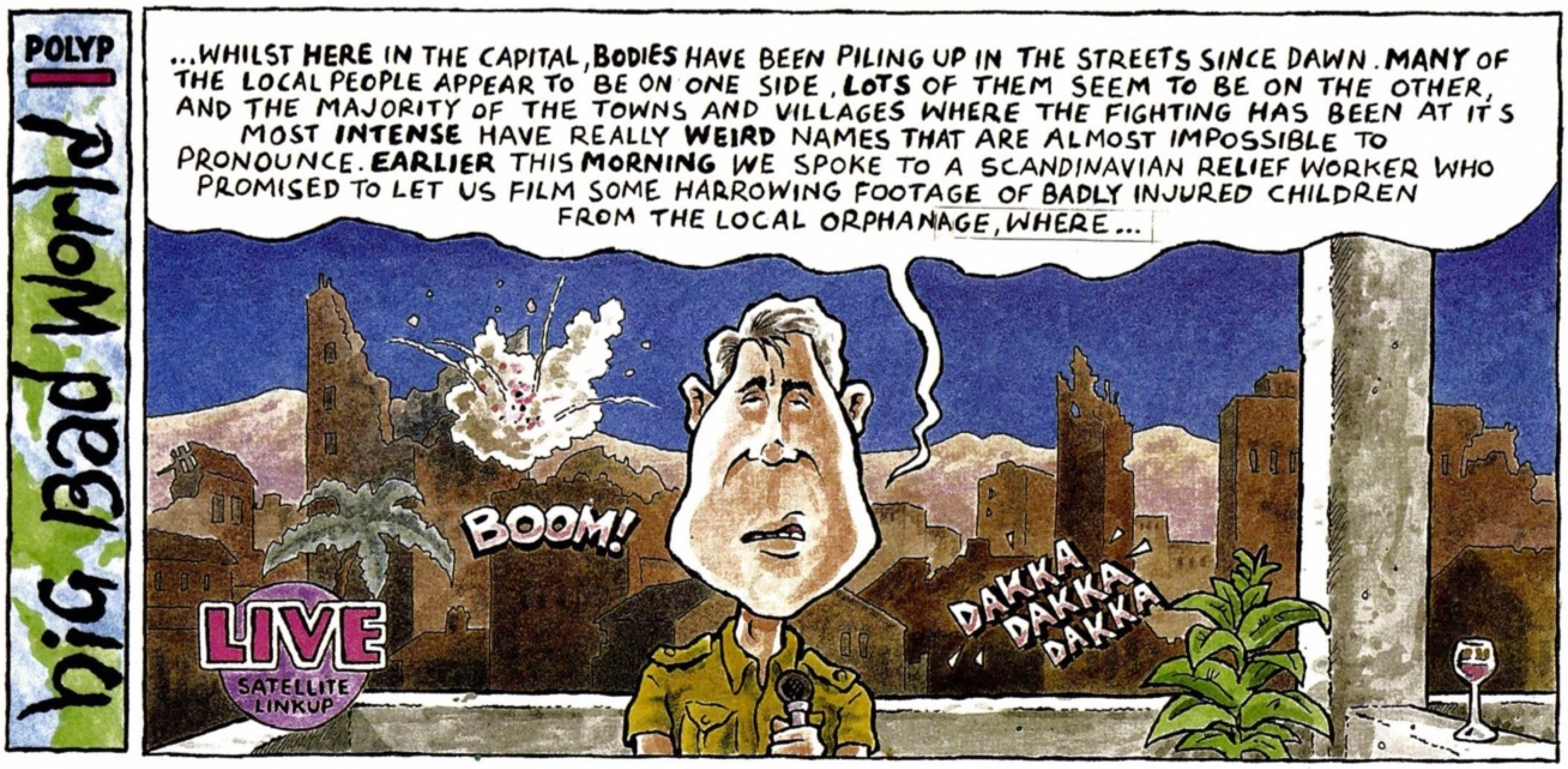
What are revolutionaries such as Leila Khaled, Daniel Cohn Bendit, Bernadette Devlin, Vo Nguyen Giap, Bobby Seale, Breyten Breytenbach, Abu Nidal and Wadi Haddad doing now?

J Cotton
Loughton, England.

Has anyone calculated the extent to which Britain's former colonies helped make it a 'developed' nation? What has been their economic impact over the centuries?

David Salter
Cardiff, Wales

IF YOU HAVE ANY QUESTIONS OR ANSWERS PLEASE SEND THEM TO **CURIOSITIES, NEW INTERNATIONALIST, 55 RECTORY ROAD, OXFORD OX4 1BW, UK,** OR TO YOUR LOCAL NI OFFICE (SEE INSIDE FRONT COVER FOR ADDRESSES).



POLYP
big Bad World
...WHILST HERE IN THE CAPITAL, BODIES HAVE BEEN PILING UP IN THE STREETS SINCE DAWN. MANY OF THE LOCAL PEOPLE APPEAR TO BE ON ONE SIDE, LOTS OF THEM SEEM TO BE ON THE OTHER, AND THE MAJORITY OF THE TOWNS AND VILLAGES WHERE THE FIGHTING HAS BEEN AT IT'S MOST INTENSE HAVE REALLY WEIRD NAMES THAT ARE ALMOST IMPOSSIBLE TO PRONOUNCE. EARLIER THIS MORNING WE SPOKE TO A SCANDINAVIAN RELIEF WORKER WHO PROMISED TO LET US FILM SOME HARROWING FOOTAGE OF BADLY INJURED CHILDREN FROM THE LOCAL ORPHANAGE, WHERE...
BOOM!
LIVE
SATELLITE LINKUP
DAKKA DAKKA DAKKA

Breakfast in Bosnia

After the Second World War **Jon Miller** found inspiration with an international brigade building the Youth Railway near Sarajevo. He wonders what went wrong.

SHORTLY after being demobilized in 1946 I went to a meeting held by the British Yugoslav Association in London. I was fascinated by the story of reconstruction in that country. A 'Youth Railway' was to be built somewhere in Bosnia the next summer and a British Brigade was being organized to take part.

Everything seemed so cut and dried in those days. The old world of capitalism was rightly crumbling. At long last humanity had taken the great step forward to a future of peace and international goodwill. I thought it sounded like a great idea that comradeship could be harnessed for peace instead of war, and I joined.

It *was* a great idea. In fact I still look upon my time working on that railway as being one of the most inspiring of my life. Croats and Serbs, Jews and Arabs, all worked together in harmony. Anyone who at that time had given an accurate account of Bosnia today would probably have been certified insane.

After a gruelling three-day journey by train we arrived at our destination, the little village of Nemila. The station had been lit by bright portable lamps to greet us. We were packed into the back of a lorry and finally stopped in a small, mud-covered square surrounded by wooden huts. After a snack of bread and plum jam washed down with milkless tea – the usual short-notice Bosnian meal and the invariable breakfast – we were shown into one of the huts for the rest of the night.

The next morning we prepared to leave for Nemila camp, a quarter of an hour's walk away. We marched off, Union Jack unfurled, not entirely in step but bravely singing 'It's a Long Way to Tipperary', along the banks of the Bosna river. What happened next took us completely by surprise. The strains of 'Tipperary' were hopelessly lost in the robust singing of a column of men and women, dressed in light-blue dungarees, marching towards us with the Greek flag at their head. The next moment we found ourselves sitting on broad Greek shoulders, being bounced up and down to thunderous cries of 'Long live the democratic peoples of England!' and 'Down with Anglo-American imperialism!'. In this manner we entered Nemila camp.

The whole International Brigade had gathered to greet us. From a wooden platform, decorated with the flags of all the nationalities present, we were welcomed by the camp commandant, 24-year-old Luke Banovic. Speakers welcomed us from the Swedish, Danish, Australian, Greek, Palestinian and Triestrian brigades. After what seemed an eternity the meeting broke up, though even then the Greeks seemed reluctant to put us down.

We were billeted with the Australians and Palestinians – who included both Arabs and Jews. On the wall of the hut was painted 'Long live Arab-Jewish Anti-Imperialist Unity!'. Here on Yugoslav soil the Arab-Jewish problem appeared to be solved.

The 'democratic peoples of England' bounce on Greek shoulders near Sarajevo.

JON MILLER

Eventually, four days later, we went into action. After breakfast of tea, bread and plum jam, we fell in and marched off to work at six in the morning. We sang as we marched, of course, but never managed to compete successfully with the other brigades. We worked near the entrance to the mile-long Vranduk tunnel. Our job was to clear away rock from the bottom of a cliff that was being blasted by paid professionals. We filled tip-up trucks with rock and pushed them some 200 metres down the line where the rock helped to build up an embankment. Both sexes worked together on the line. I'd never seen anyone work as hard as the Yugoslav women on their Youth Railway, and for that matter I don't think I ever have since. At the end of a day when they'd done about twice as much as any of us they'd still have the energy to sing and do their national dances around the camp fires.

When not working hard physically we engaged in argument and discussion. Although some of the differences of opinion were extreme – in our group we had Young Conservatives as well as Young Communists – I never saw any bad feeling as a result. Everyone seemed to feel genuinely united in a common cause, and that is something you seldom come across outside of actual war. More's the pity.

So what's gone wrong in Bosnia? I think there was a lesson for us all in the building of the Yugoslav Youth Railway. A lesson as yet unlearned. ■

Jon Miller is now retired from a career making television programmes for children in South Africa, Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand as well as Britain.

Country profile

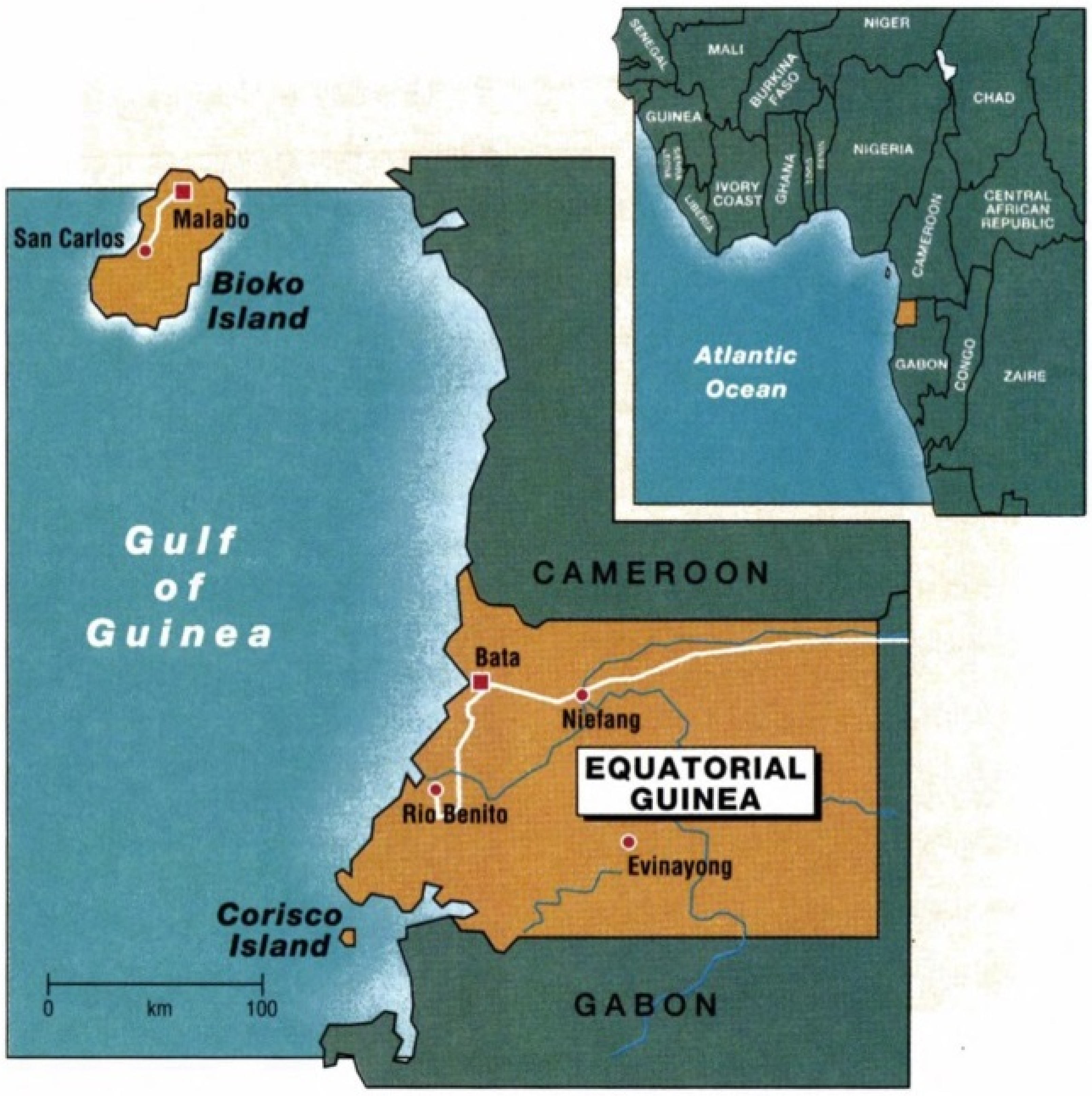
Equatorial Guinea

A SIGN hangs bleakly by the road from the airport to the capital which used to read 'Welcome to Equatorial Guinea'. Time and neglect have caused the bottom part of the sign to fall off and the top part to rust. So now it's no longer 'Welcome', just 'Wel...'

Not much is ever written about Equatorial Guinea, one of the smallest countries in Africa. But what has been written about this, the only Spanish-speaking nation on the continent, tells its own story.

There's one book called *Tropical Gangsters*, another *The African Tragedy* and a third *Small Is Not Always Beautiful*. Equatorial Guinea has quietly suffered a brutal and bizarre dictatorship which ranks alongside Idi Amin's Uganda or that of the Emperor of Central Africa, Jean-Bedel Bokassa.

Propped up by a neo-colonialist struggle for influence between Spain and France as ludicrous as it is futile, one family has used violence, repression and fear to rule Equatorial Guinea as its personal fiefdom for a generation.



Inheriting the dubious colonial legacy of General Franco's fascist dictatorship, court translator turned self-proclaimed 'Unique Miracle' Francisco Macias Nguema led the country to independence in 1968. In the decade which followed he closed schools, hospitals and churches. A third of the population was killed or fled into exile. Opponents, real or imagined, were eliminated.

He was overthrown and executed by his own nephew, Brigadier-General Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo, in 1979. Obiang reopened the country to the West and promised an end to the endemic abuse of human rights. But in practice all power remains concentrated in the hands of the President and a few trusted members of his family and clan. As one old man put it, 'the same dog now wears a different collar'.

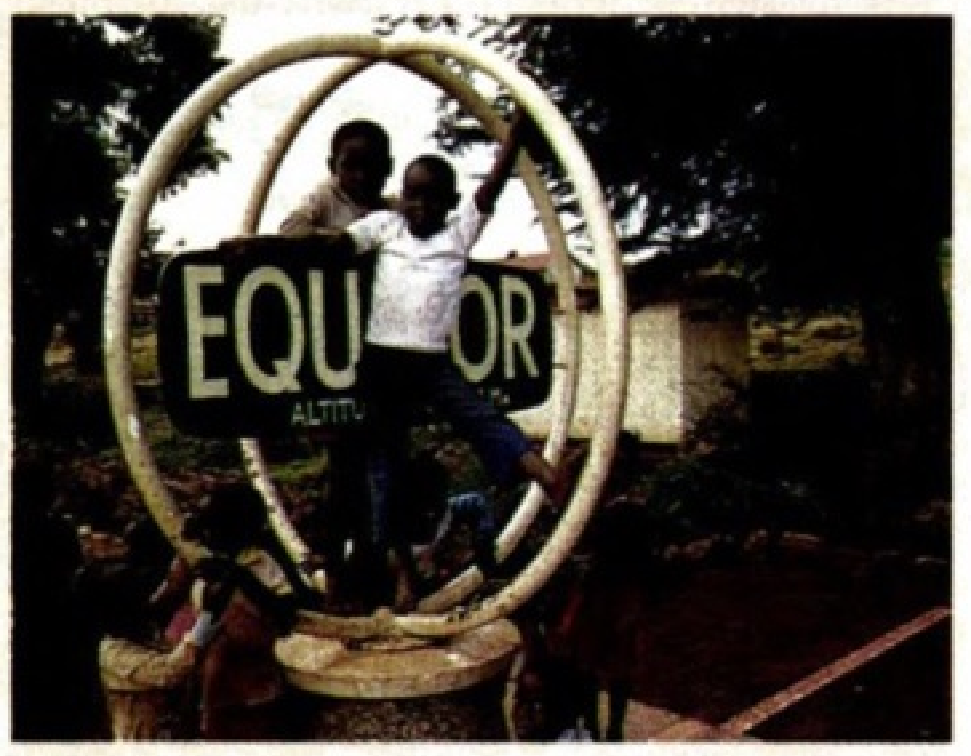
Years of misrule and misappropriation of funds have left the economy – once the pride of Africa – in a state of collapse, dependent on aid hand-outs and, says informed speculation, the dividends from sanctions-busting and money-laundering.

Under pressure from Western donors, multi-party politics was technically legalized in 1991. But opposition parties frequently complain about harassment and arbitrary arrest of their members. Access to the media – all state-controlled – is permitted only to the Government and its apologists. There are few checks on the activities of the security forces and hardly anyone leaves prison without a beating.

Yet President Obiang appears to have found a new patron in the form of multinational oil companies: Equatorial Guinea has potentially hundreds of millions of dollars' worth of oil reserves. But commercial considerations mean such companies are even less interested in issues of human rights and corruption than foreign governments. All the signs are that much of the considerable wealth about to descend on Equatorial Guinea will be diverted away from the needs of the people and towards the pockets of the President and his clique.

George Clinton

AT A GLANCE



BENOIT GYSEMBERGH / CAMERA PRESS

Leader President Teodoro Obiang Nguema Mbasogo

Economy GNP per capita $330 (US $22,240)

Monetary unit: African franc

Main exports: Cocoa, coffee, timber

Main imports: Foodstuffs, transport equipment, petroleum products

External debt: $282 million (1992)

Agriculture makes up 60 per cent of GDP and almost all exports.The main domestic food crops are cassava, sweet potato and banana. Industry is limited to small-scale food and timber processing. The only mineral exploited is panned alluvial gold. But the oil reserves recently found on- and offshore should meet domestic needs.

People 369,000

Health Infant mortality 118 per 1,000 live births *(US 9 per 1,000)*. One doctor for every 5,440 inhabitants (1986).

Culture Most people are Bantu-speaking but there are Ibo and Efik people on the islands who have migrated from Nigeria. On the mainland most people are Fang or Ndowe.

Religion: Catholicism and local animist faiths

Languages: The official language is Spanish, but people's first language would be based on the ethnic breakdown above.

Sources: *Third World Guide 93/94; State of the World's Children 1994; Africa Review 1993/94; Microsoft Encarta '95.*

Previously profiled December 1985

NI star rating

EXCELLENT	★★★★★
GOOD	★★★★
FAIR	★★★
POOR	★★
APPALLING	★

STAR RATINGS

INCOME DISTRIBUTION ★
A corrupt élite lords it over the grindingly poor.

SELF-RELIANCE ★★
A big trade deficit and a heavy reliance on aid.

POSITION OF WOMEN ★
One of the highest maternal mortality rates in the world.

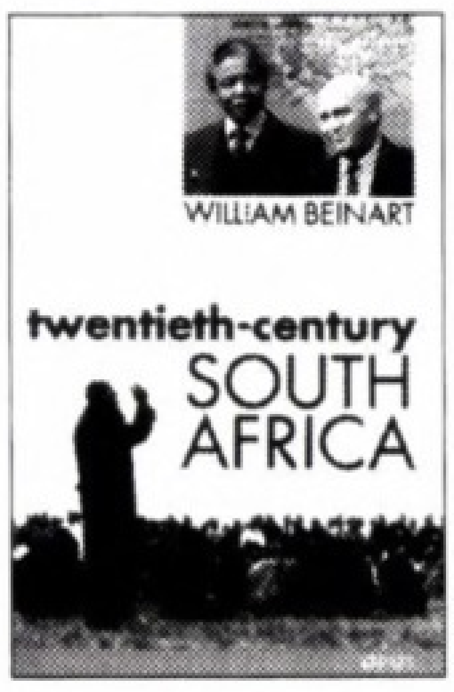
LITERACY ★★
At 50% is poor, though official figures suggest high primary enrolment.

FREEDOM ★
Rampant abuses repeatedly condemned by the UN, the EC and Amnesty.

LIFE EXPECTANCY ★
48 years. Compares with a regional average of 52 and the US's 76.

POLITICS

NI ASSESSMENT ★
Brigadier-General Obiang's regime is one of the worst in the world. All power rests in the presidency; and the President has no political vision beyond self-enrichment, self-aggrandisement and ruthless repression.



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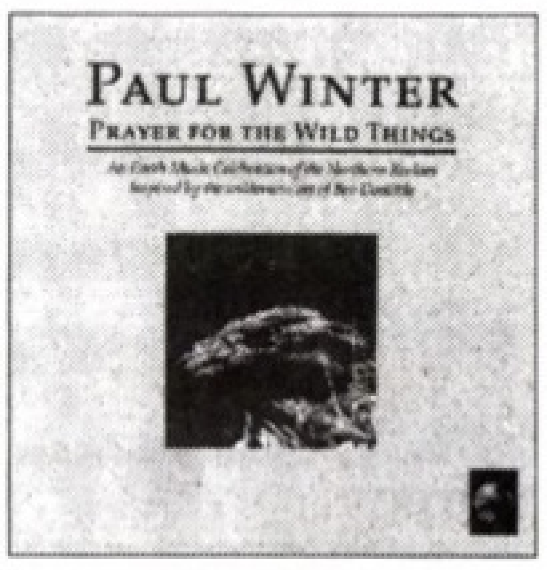

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